

'Getting things Done'

Marie Hooff and a handful of volunteers are giving the girls of Sparks Nevada a home of their own

*Story By Scott Oxarart
Photos by Tom Smedes*

Spark resident Marie Hooff has been around girls fast pitch softball long enough to know that if you're not persistent, nothing gets done.

A mother of three daughters, Hooff had a vision of a fast pitch softball complex for the girls of sparks since her oldest daughter competed nearly 20 years ago.

After eight years of meetings, this year, that vision will become a reality.

The Sparks Fast Pitch Softball Association



(SFPSA) and the Sparks Youth Sports Foundation came together to build the Sparks Fast Pitch Softball Complex, which will debut next season.

"We have been saving money forever it seems like," said Hooff, who is now an advisor for the SFPSA and secretary for the Foundation. "When nothing was happening, we decided we had to make it happen. We went out and decided where it was going to be and went from there."

The four-field complex features two newly built fields in addition to revamping two older fields. The complex is located just north of Reed High School in the Shadow Mountain Park facility.

In the past, the league played at four different sites.

Hooff gets excited when talking about it, but when she senses that it sounds like she did all the work, she quickly passes the praise.

Some disagree.

"(Hooff) is very humble, because she's been the one working on this to make it happen for at least eight years," Foundation President Mark King said. "This was her personal goal. She's very shy, but I have to say: this is all on her. This has been one of her projects for a long time."



Photos from far left to right: Trinidad Alonso Morelos and Ramon Dominguez of Tholl Fence work on one of the backstops; Marie Hooft; Ramon Dominquez works on the fencing; work is still under progress on the two new fields; Mark King, left, Hooft and Dennis White talk over the progress.

Hooft started as a SFPSA representative when her oldest daughter, Anneka, now 25, was in the 5 and 6-year-old division.

Her other daughters, Jessica, now 23, and Sierra, 16 and on the Reed High softball team, started to play softball, too, and Hooft continued her involvement.

She took money the league saved every year and invested it into certificates of deposit. Sometimes it would only be \$100 at a time.

The plan then soon got side tracked.

In 2006, the City of Sparks (Nev.) announced they were closing the Don Mello Sports Complex, thus eliminating fields for little league baseball, fast pitch and men's slow pitch softball.

When they built Golden Eagle Regional Park to replace those fields, the girls Sparks Fast Pitch league didn't get designated fields.

The SFPSA was hoping for field space, but ultimately was denied.

But the saved money continued to grow. When the SFPSA got city approval to build at Shadow Park, the complex came to life.

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"I'm doing this because I love softball and it's such a worthwhile sport," she said. "It's so good for the girls in this town."

After dodging the praise during the interview with Softball West, she ended by saying, "I really would like to downplay my part in this. It's more about the girls, I don't want any kind of recognition for this."

Hooft might want to deny credit, but at least she can rest assured she doesn't have to go to city council meetings, to worry about permits, aerial maps or renderings.

The Sparks Fast Pitch Softball Complex is ready to go for next March.

And it's something to be very proud of.

"She's pushed all the switches and made it all happen," King said. "She's an amazing person."