

Southington

Club to kick off lights-buying fundraising

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SOUTHINGTON — By the time the first soccer ball gets kicked in the fall, the days are getting shorter, creating a narrow practice window between when coaches and referees get out of work and sunset.

To generate more practice time, the Southington Soccer Club wants to raise about \$200,000 to install lights at the two soccer fields at Recreation Park, said Kathy Fuller, a member of the soccer club.

The lights would increase evening practice and game opportunities for about 1,000 children, she said. It is very difficult for coaches to rush from work to get enough practice time in before it gets dark, said Ans Swanson, president of the club.

The club runs two practices, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. and 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the spring. But by the end of October, the group is lucky if it has time for one practice session, said Ed Baker, the club's vice president.

"Our season is cut short because of daylight-savings time," Swanson said. "We are the only sport in town that does not have lights." daylight-savings time ends Oct. 29, which pushes sunset even earlier.

The town's soccer programs include the Southington Soccer Club, a year-round travel league with between 120

and 200 children, depending on the season; and the town's recreational league, which includes 1,000 children. Games for both leagues are played at Recreation Park.

Through donations and volunteers, the club plans to raise enough money by next spring. The town gave the club its first donation of \$15,000. The club also applied for a grant from the National Soccer Federation.

On Sept. 9, the Southington Soccer Club will officially kick off its fundraising with a concert by "Number Nine," a Beatles tribute band. Club officials also hope the concert increases awareness that it is trying to get lights and to ask those in the audience for help.

"They are just plain fun. They play Beatles music like I grew up listening to, not a particular rendition," Fuller said.

The band had been scheduled to play Aug. 25, but heavy rains forced the concert to be rescheduled to Sept. 9 at 4:30 p.m., with a rain contingency of 5 p.m. at Derynoski School.

Field lights will also attract more players to the program, officials said. "There is a certain intangible about them. Kids love to play under the lights," Baker said.

The club had thought about buying lights for many years, but it was scared off by the amount of time and money required. "They are almost a necessity now," Fuller said.

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