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Former teammates honor GHS basketball player who died Jan. 16

The eye-catching improvements to a Grafton basketball court are nearly finished, but the mission to honor the memory of Grafton High School student Josh Davis-Joiner has just begun.

Debbie Joiner said she is blown away by the court created to pay tribute to her son. “When I walked onto the court, tears started to flow,” Joiner said. “It’s the perfect place for kids and the community to play at.”

Davis-Joiner, 17, was a guard on the Grafton varsity boys’ basketball team. He died from an undiagnosed heart condition after collapsing at a practice Jan. 16.

The basketball court at Veterans Memorial Park on 13th Avenue is where Davis-Joiner spent many hours playing the sport he had a passion for before his sudden death.

The newly installed bright orange and black surface is now drawing crowds to the park.

“As soon as I showed up it kind of took my breath away, but then I just wanted to play on it.” said Kevin Collins, one of three students overseeing the memorial project in his friend’s name.

Collins, Robbie Doring and Jake Wilde were basketball teammates of Davis-Joiner.

Together the three have raised nearly $40,000 for the renovation project that includes a new court surface, two basketball hoops, a brick walkway, landscaping and a memorial plaque.

Another special feature to the court is Davis-Joiner’s signature printed on the east and west sides of the surface.

“It reminds me of him signing his papers for school or his homework. His signature is so sentimental. That alone is a tear-jerker for me,” Joiner said, noting the signature was taken off of her son’s driver’s license.

“He was smooth and it shows in his signature,” Collins said.

The new surface is made up of plastic tile squares that were installed on top of the old court.

“It’s great. There’s no rocks or anything. It plays like wood,” Doring said.

“The ball bounces better on it,” Collins added.

“It was something we had been waiting for since we started the project. Now that it’s here, we are happy to finally get to play on it,” Wilde said.

The project plan, which was approved by the village’s Parks and Recreation Board, is being paid for through a variety of fundraising efforts including t-shirts and wristband sales, corporate sponsors and ribbon-cutting festivities.

According to Doring, spreading the word about the memorial project took time, but when it did, funds came in.

T-shirt sales raised nearly $6,000.

A buy-a-brick campaign has raised $13,000.

Collins said bricks are still for sale, with the walkway and landscaping being installed in the next two weeks.

“We can pop the blank bricks out and put new ones in that people get engraved,” he said.

Several elite sponsors have donated $2,000 or more to the project as well.

“Our goal was $40,000 and at first we thought it was a little bit of a stretch, but after all the donors and support from the community it was reached pretty quickly,” Doring said.

The new surface is a big improvement over the former court, which had nets held together by zip-ties and a surface greatly in need of repairs.

The new flooring will hold up against the winter elements, but just in case, 200 extra tiles will be given to the Park and Recreation Department so broken ones can be replaced.

Collins, Doring and Wilde agreed their friend Davis-Joiner would have loved the upgrades made to the court where he spent time teaching his little sister Joshea how to play the sport he enjoyed the most.

“He was such a good kid and I wish we could have done something for him when he was here, but now that he’s gone what better way to give him what he deserved than his own court,” Wilde said.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Josh Davis-Joiner Memorial basketball court will be held during the 53rd annual Grafton Athletic Booster Club corn roast on Sunday, Aug. 26.

For information on how to purchase a brick, email jdjmemorialfund@wi.rr.com.

Image Information: THE BRIGHT ORANGE flooring is one of the many features at the Josh Davis-Joiner Memorial basketball court in Grafton. Showing off the court were Josh's sister, 10-year-old Joshea Davis-Joiner, surrounded by (from left) Robbie Doring, Josh's mom Debbie Joiner, Kevin Collins and Jake Wilde. Josh (inset at right) was passionate about basketball.
Photo by Sam Arendt