

MOUNT VERNON VOICE

Vol. 11 No. 41

Serving Mount Vernon, Lee, and Alexandria

October 17, 2012 50 Cents



Staff photo/Steve Hunt

Student speakers at the event included Kyle Matthews, captain of the varsity lacrosse team, with bullhorn, Matthew Boster, captain of the varsity soccer team, right, football player Tay Diggs, and Will Prater, not pictured.



Staff photo/Steve Hunt

Rev. Tuck Bowerfind, pastor of St. Luke's Episcopal and a co-chair of VOICE, addressed the crowd.

WP Students Plead for Turf Field

By STEVE HUNT
Staff Writer

West Potomac High varsity soccer captain Matthew Boster told a group of people who had come to the school Monday evening that around the county WP has the derogatory nickname "West Poor."

Mount Vernon Supervisor Gerry Hyland doesn't think much of that, and said so in no uncertain terms.

Hyland who played high school football back in the day, said that if he was on the line and an opposing player said that to him, "I'd knock him on his butt."

But Hyland is doing more than just talking.

In the past several months, the group VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement) has been working with Hyland and Lee Supervisor Jeff McKay, the Fairfax County Park Authority and the Fairfax County School Board in a collaborative effort to address a need for more after-school activities and better recreation facilities for youth living in the Richmond Highway corridor area.

One of their major priorities is to have turf fields installed at West Potomac and Mount

See VOICE Page 11

VOICE Seeks Area Improvements

VOICE from Page 3

Vernon high schools. VOICE members and supporters heard firsthand about the poor condition of the fields at West Potomac from students who play on them, including Boster, and Wolverines varsity lacrosse captain Kyle Matthews and football players Tay Diggs and Will Prater.

The students described playing on fields that are uneven, have rocks and even broken glass and pleaded for improved conditions and artificial turf fields.

"It kind of sucks," said Prater, after playing on fields at other Fairfax County schools which are in much better condition.

Hyland told the crowd that he is working on, and has made progress towards, having artificial turf fields at both schools and vowed that it will happen.

Hyland explained that as more development came to the corridor, he had required developers make "proffers" towards improvements to the community, such as artificial turf fields at the high schools.

In fact, he said he has already negotiated towards a "half-field" with a developer who is building a high-density residential development in Huntington, and he is working with others for the rest.

The only issue, however is that it may come too late for players such as Boster and Matthews, as Hyland noted that the proffers are not required until the development is constructed and the residences are being filled — some-



Photo courtesy Tina Bak-Brevik

thing that will take time.

Fairfax County School Board member Dan Storck (Mount Vernon) said the school board is supportive of having proffers help pay for the cost of improvements at schools and pointed out that no one disputes the need at the Mount Vernon area schools and there needs to be equity across the school system.

Fairfax County Park Authority board member Linwood Gorham (Mount Vernon) acknowledged that it cannot build fields on school grounds, but it can partner

with the school system and share in the construction costs.

For the community's part, Rick Genuario, president of the West Potomac Athletic Boosters Club, said the two schools' boosters clubs are committed to raising \$100,000 which will cover the engineering cost for the turf fields at both schools.

Rev. Tuck Bowerfield, a VOICE co-chair, concluded the meeting at West Potomac saying that the results they all heard that night are "a great success" and "an outstanding result."