

## TALK TO US!

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# Winning is good school funding plan

Looking for a way to ease the budget crunch for your high school?

Have a more successful football program.

Think how much more money Bedford has collected in gate receipts over the last two years compared to when it was 3-6 or 2-7?

Bedford has always had solid fan support. It's probably the best in the Region. Even during lean years, Bedford drew well. Now that it has a better product, interest has soared.

Bedford took in \$9,000 at its homecoming game in 2008. It probably would have done even better this year, but Mother Nature didn't cooperate. Still, the Mules played before overflow crowds at most of their home games.

A successful football team does much more than increase school revenue. More than one administrator has told me over the years that football sets the tone for the school year. The season starts in August, even before classes begin. When the team is doing well and the students and community are excited, it puts a fresh coat of paint on everything.

Even though state funding has been cut in Michigan, schools still receive thousands of dollars for each student. A successful football team attracts transfers and prevents the good athletes from leaving for a better program.



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You might be thinking that schools should be concentrating on academics, not athletics. No one said anything about shifting the focus from the classroom to the athletic field. Keep academics at a high level. But it never hurts to have a good football team or a hot-shot basketball team.

Think how many more tickets Airport sold during the Derek Anderson and Jim Duffy era.

Think how much more money Ida took in during Nic Jobe's basketball career.

Remember Whiteford's 23-1 basketball team in the 2002-03 season? People stood in the doorways to watch. They couldn't even see part of the court, but they wanted to be at the game.

There's nothing quite like a good football or basketball team to unite the community. It's wonderful to see the pride Petersburg is showing this fall.

Summerfield went from 1-8 two years ago to 6-4 last season, to the current record of 9-1. It went from never being in the playoffs to qualifying last year, to getting a home game this year, to winning a home game and getting another. That translates into more revenue and respect for the school.

It takes money to operate a highly successful athletic program and money is in short supply these days. But don't underestimate the fund-raising ability of athletics.

Airport has a first-class baseball field, built with donations, volunteer workers and big-hearted coaches.

The same can be said about Monroe's baseball diamond. It has been transformed from a mediocre field to one the players, coaches and community can be proud of.

Bedford is organizing Mule Muscle, Inc., a fund-raising drive to obtain \$350,000 for a new weight room. Not a penny will come from the school's budget.

Does it sound silly to be tackling such an ambitious project in these penny-pinching times?

What if the snazzy weight room causes 10 athletes to transfer to Bedford? What if it helps keep prime athletes from leaving? That's a considerable chunk of change in state funding, not to mention higher gate receipts.

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