

LOCAL NEWS

Bartram to provide Barrow turf field

'Project Alaska' will pay for new artificial grass field for northern Alaska high school

By **HAYS CARLYON** | [More](#) by this reporter | hays.carlyon@staugustinerecord.com | Posted: Thursday, March 1, 2007 ; Updated: 6:30 AM on Thursday, March 1, 2007

There was plenty of warmth and sunshine at Bartram Trail High School on Wednesday.

Meanwhile in Barrow, Alaska, the high was minus-18 degrees.

Barrow High School and Bartram Trail seemingly have nothing in common. However, the love of football has brought the two schools together.

Bartram Trail kicked off its "Project Alaska" fundraising campaign Wednesday, hoping to raise \$500,000 to build an artificial turf field for the Barrow Whalers football team.

Dozens of people attended the ceremony held on Bartram's field, including Jacksonville Jaguars receiver Ernest Wilford.

Barrow is the nation's northernmost settlement and has a population of roughly 4,200. With brutal weather conditions, fielding a team was a monumental task but last season Barrow played its first year of football, going 1-5. When the Whalers defeated Sitka High 28-22, the players and coaches celebrated by jumping into the Arctic Ocean, which is 100 yards from the field.

There were drawbacks. With the frigid conditions and frozen tundra, the squad was forced to play on a gravel field.

ESPN ran a story on its web site and featured the team in November of last year on "Sportscenter." Bartram Trail quarterback Kyle Parker's mom, Cathy, saw the feature and immediately knew she wanted to help.

"People think we have nothing in common with them, but that's wrong," Cathy Parker said. "We have the most important thing in common and that is our sons.

"They are playing on a gravel field, getting nicked up and spraining ankles. It costs \$20,000 for them to fly in opponents, because there are no roads that lead into the city. Their closest opponent is 500 miles away. They still had a season and even won one game. I felt we could help this team."

Cathy Parker's efforts have been well received. Her husband Carl Parker, Bartram's offensive coordinator and the assistant director of parks and recreation in St. Johns County, contacted ProGrass about building the field. ProGrass agreed to join the project and donations have already begun coming in. The hope is that the field will be ready for the start of next season.

"We want to bless the young men up in Barrow with what we have here," Bartram Trail football coach Darrell Sutherland said. "We wanted to reach out and help provide the same resources we have. We're excited to give back some of the things that have been given to us."

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Erik Hill/Anchorage Daily News John Lambrecht of Barrow, right, nearly blocks a pass by Delta quarterback Calvin Fellman during fourth-quarter action Saturday afternoon August 19, 2006 at Narl Football Field.



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Bartram Trail received a state-of-the-art football field in 2004 after hosting the New England Patriots in preparation for Super Bowl XXXIX held in Jacksonville.

"We have this amazing field, a Super Bowl Sunday field," Bartram Trail lineman John Watts said. "We never have to worry about in practice about how we are going to be able to cut on the field. The Barrow kids don't have anything like it. We want to give them a home-field advantage that will benefit their community."

Bartram will also welcome the Whalers in late May during the final week of spring practice. Bartram's coaches and players will conduct clinics aimed at helping the Barrow players, most of whom had never played football until last season, develop their skills.

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