

Local students design, construct project for Utica ballpark

BY SARAH WOJCIK

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STERLING HEIGHTS/UTICA — Some local high school students will be able to see their work used in the real world thanks to a partnership between Jimmy John's Field and Henry Ford II High School.

Brian Berryman, executive director of baseball operations for the United Shore Professional Baseball League, said he reached out to the school with the idea of a storage space for bats and helmets at the ball field. Staff and students took a rendering of the project and ran with it.

"We wanted to do something with the school to make sure we were good community partners," Berryman said.

Computer-aided design students designed the helmet cubbies and bat box units, and a few dedicated woodshop students calculated the project dimensions from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, April 30, woodshop teacher Chris Davis said.

"We have a few students from each hour work on this. Many students are in the middle of their own projects as well," Davis said. "Almost the entire project has been done with portable tools that carpenters use

See BALLPARK on page 6A

Ballpark

from page 1A

on the job."

Among those tools include new Festool worktables, table saws, sanders, clamps and much more, Davis said. After the two sets of cubbies and bat boxes have been constructed, Davis said the next step will be to paint and assemble them.

"I'm hoping (it will be done in) a week," Davis said May 6. "It just depends on how much we get done each day. We have a good crew working on it."

Sophomore Quintin Smith, 15, of Sterling Heights, was one of the students who worked on the drawings and dimensions April 30.

"At first, it was pretty time-consuming with all the math, because you have to get every single piece right, but once we figured it out, it was pretty simple," Smith said. "I actually think it will be pretty awesome."

Smith said he is excited to see the project used in the community, and that he chose to take woodworking because he likes to use his hands and it comes to him naturally.

Ford Principal Ken Cucchi said he is a strong supporter of the collaboration, and the ballpark is right in his backyard.

"Anytime we get the kids some real-world experience, that's just fantastic, and that's what this project did," Cucchi said. "It really gave them the chance to work with the local community and do something that will be there forever, hopefully."

Berryman volunteered the idea of assembling the units at the ballpark and giving students a tour of the nearly completed facility.

He said progress on the stadium is flying and on track. It has to be, because the first game, between the Utica Unicorns and the Birmingham-Bloomfield Beavers, is set to take place May 30.

He said crews are at the stadium seven days a week and estimated that 70-100 people work on the field each day, doing everything from field construction to electrical work to cleaning to painting to tile



Photo by Donna Agusti

From left, Joey Hoover, 17; United Shore Professional Baseball League official Brian Berryman; woodshop teacher Chris Davis; and Quintin Smith, 15, gather around a project that Henry Ford II High School students are working on for the United Shore Professional Baseball League during woodshop class May 6.

May 16-19, and Berryman said most of its seasonal staff positions have been filled. "Utica Ford have been such

good partners," Berryman said. "These kids deserve all the credit. I supplied the materials, but they designed it and put everything

together. You can see how hard they're working." Call Staff Writer Sarah Wojcik at (586) 498-1029.

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