

## The Baxter Springs Field of Dreams

The story behind the Baxter Springs Field of Dreams baseball and softball complex is the culmination of a dream that could only take place in America! For nearly two decades, Coach Don Karnes, the baseball coach who implemented the high school baseball program in Baxter Springs in 1981, and organized and coached the current American Legion program in 1982, dreamed of a field for his baseball teams. During that time his teams shared a field with the older Little League teams. In the summer, the American Legion team had to play most of their games on the road due to youth teams having priority.

Therefore, in August of 1999, Coach Karnes and his wife Betty, decided to go for making his dream a reality. Along with friends, Gene and Linda Leonhard, they formed the not for profit corporation, Baxter Springs Field of Dreams, Inc. Attorney Kent Lynch started the legal work for the corporation. DeAnn Hill, CPA, agreed to be the accountant and Brad Cox, Executive Vice President of the Baxter State Bank, took on the job of treasurer. Then Karnes and his wife donated twelve acres at the edge of town for the complex, and the fun began!!!

Since that time the four friends and many other local baseball and softball fans have worked hard to make the dream come true. Major contributors, Robert D. and Reine Hartley helped get the project off the ground.

The friends solicit donations, conduct fund raising events, sell signs for the fences and with the help of local volunteers, do much of the work to build and maintain the complex. After the games the American Legion players all work on the field to get it ready for the next game. Parents pitch in to work in the state inspected "state of the art" concessions building, and clean up the seating stadium.

The complex is nearing completion with the seating stadium for the softball field and lights being the last two major projects. At this time the American Legion team plays on the baseball field and the softball field is utilized by both boys and girls' youth teams ages eight to twelve. However, the high school baseball and softball teams are unable to use the fields in the spring due to the lack of lighting needed for the high school programs.

Hopefully, the funds for the lights will be available soon as Coach Karnes lives by the same advice he gives his players, "The thing is don't quit! Keep working and keep planning and you'll be a winner in the end"

For more information and pictures see:

[www.baxterspringsfieldofdreams.com](http://www.baxterspringsfieldofdreams.com)