

Students 'build' athletic field

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It's like a marathon race amid years of hazards and obstacles, but an Oakbank effort to build a school athletic field is one the students are determined to run alone.

Springfield Collegiate's 700-plus students are driving the project to organize, plan and raise funds for an eight-lane track and sports field at their school, about a 10-minute drive east of Winnipeg.

This weekend, the journey will take a big step with a fundraising bash in Beausejour.

"The students are running that, too," said teacher Jim Osler of the dinner and dance featuring Harlequin Saturday at Beausejour's Brokenhead River Community Hall.

"We're not after government funding," Osler added. "The students are running and driving this whole thing."

The drive is led by the Field of Visions group — students whose project was spurred in 2006 through a business plan assignment in one of Osler's classes. One student's observation that their field and track had seen better days led to a focused effort to produce

a better outdoor facility.

"It's something really needed, and a great cause," Grade 12 student Karyn Fanstone said. "We have a set of soccer fields and a baseball diamond, and that's about it. I'm on the cross-country team, and all our practices are on the streets so we have to watch out for cars. It's not the greatest environment."

Osler echoed the students' worries. "I coach rugby, and we have to pick rocks off the field so we don't have people getting hurt," he said. "The students looked at it and said, 'This is a problem. Let's try to fix this.'"

The challenge is drumming up cash for a project that could cost upward of \$1 million. With 2012 as a goal to have the field in place, Field of Visions — having hired a consulting engineering firm — is planning to launch a fundraising campaign this spring.

Tickets — priced at \$65, and with \$25 tax receipts for buyers — for Saturday's Rock With It fundraising dinner can be purchased by calling Springfield Collegiate at 444-2404. Further information is online at sunrisesd.ca.

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Osler (left) with students (from left) Andrea Doerksen, Haley Boles, Caitlin Woods, Fanstone and Ryan Jones (below) hope to raise money to build a sports facility.