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School District Of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Eagles And Philadelphia Local Initiatives Support Corporation Celebrate Dedication Of Newly Refurbished Benjamin L. Johnston Memorial Stadium Athletic Super Site

The Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia Super Site is already serving area schools and communities as the home for football, track and field, and soccer competitions

PHILADELPHIA -- The School District of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Eagles and Philadelphia Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) officially dedicated the Phase I completion of the Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia Athletic Super Site for Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association competition today. The newly refurbished Benjamin L. Johnston Memorial Stadium facility is already hosting football, track and field, and soccer competition for District schools.

The evening dedication event took place on the field before the start of the Germantown High School vs. Mastbaum High School football game. The game was Germantown's PIAA District XII/ Philadelphia Public League regular season home opener.

The stadium was named after the late Germantown head football head coach in 1984. Johnston was head coach from 1972 to his passing in July 1982 and served as president of the Philadelphia Public League Football Coaches Association.

Germantown, Martin Luther King, and Overbrook High School and Imhotep Charter will also host football games at the facility this school year.

Phase I renovations at the Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia Super Site included:

- A state-of-the-art synthetic all-weather turf field that can be used for football, soccer, field hockey and other sports;
- State-of-the-art drainage system;
- New all-weather six-lane running track with built-in timing system;
- New black vinyl coated fencing around the facility;
- State-of-the art stadium and security lighting for evening games, tournaments and community activities;
- New press box and stadium sound system;
- New football goalposts;
- New score board with built-in timing system;
- New visitor and home team grandstands. The home side sits 2,500 people and the visitors' side can sit 1,500 people. The entire facility now has greater accessibility for those with disabilities.

In all, nearly \$5million was invested in the Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia Athletic Super Site during Phase I. Included in this was a \$200,000 grant in 2003 by the National Football League's Youth Football Fund Grassroots Program, through LISC, to install the new field.

This innovative public-nonprofit-private partnership has made a significant difference in the neighborhood, providing recreational amenities that were not available just a few years ago.

“Since our academic reforms began three years ago, our 185,000 students have shown their successes in the classroom with increasing test scores every year,” said James Nevels, Chairman of the School Reform Commission (SRC). “Our student-athletes have also shown their athletic prowess in PIAA District XII/Philadelphia Public League and statewide competition. The newly refurbished Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia Super Site is now a perfect venue for our student athletes to participate in competition.”

On behalf of the SRC and the School District of Philadelphia, the dedication of this beautifully refurbished Benjamin Johnston Stadium is another great day in the District’s rich athletic history,” said Paul Vallas, CEO of the School District of Philadelphia. “These Super Sites throughout the city will not only give our students and citizens a great place to play, but it also offers our communities something that they can use and be proud of.”

The Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia Super Site dedication was attended by members of the Johnston family, School District officials and representatives from LISC, the Philadelphia Eagles, elected officials and community leaders. The elected officials invited to the event and representing the area around Germantown High School and the stadium are Pennsylvania Congressman Chaka Fattah, Pennsylvania State Senator LeAnn Washington; Pennsylvania State Representatives Dwight Evans, John Myers and Chelle Parker; and Philadelphia City Councilmembers Marian B. Tasco and Donna Reed Miller.

“From the beginning, the Philadelphia Eagles and the NFL have been pleased to support the Benjamin L. Johnston Memorial Stadium facility,” said Eagles Chairman/CEO Jeffrey Lurie. “The new field is a great addition to the community and will positively impact the children in the Philadelphia region.”

The NFL Grassroots Program is a partnership between the NFL, which provides funding for the program, and LISC, which provides technical assistance and manages the program. The goal of the NFL Grassroots Program is to provide non-profit, neighborhood-based organizations with financial and technical assistance to improve the quality, safety, and accessibility of local football fields. Philadelphia LISC has taken advantage of this program in the past, and continues to work with the School District of Philadelphia to identify additional opportunities to access this program.

“LISC’s partnership with the National Football League’s Youth Football Fund is essential to our comprehensive approach to community development,” said Mark Edwards, Philadelphia LISC Program Director. “LISC supports community development through residential, commercial and educational financing as well as support for community centers and commonly-used space such as football fields.

“Since 1998, the NFL and the NFL Player’s Association has provided more than \$15 million to help build new or refurbish old community football fields in over 40 cities across the country,” Edwards continued. “The impact that these fields at schools, in parks, at community centers have had on the fabric of the neighborhoods surrounding them is incalculable. This is the third field the partnership has done in Philadelphia and the School District of Philadelphia has done an outstanding job.”

The newly refurbished Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia facility is being funded through the District’s \$1.5 billion, five year Capital Improvement Plan. This capital improvement plan is significantly changing the entire District and is one of the largest public works project in Philadelphia’s recent history. The District is in the third year of the plan.

As part of the plan, the District is renovating at least four Super Sites throughout Philadelphia so teams can play evening and playoff games and communities can utilize state of the art athletic facilities. All the Super Sites were chosen to provide students and community members with easy access from public transportation, as well as multiple sporting venues, parking and centrality to more than one District high school.

During the past three years, the District has also invested funds to refurbish school gyms with new floors, bleachers, lights, paint and safety upgrades. District baseball fields and tennis courts are also being

upgraded with new surfaces and support facilities. The District has also purchased new sports equipment for athletes to provide students with safe, state-of-the-art products that will enhance their competitive skills and provide coaches with equipment necessary to coach safely and effectively.

In addition to the Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia location, the other Super Site already in operation is Charles Martin Stadium at Northeast High School in Northeast Philadelphia. The Northeast Super Site has been in operation since the 2004-05 school year and final Phase II renovations should begin in early 2006. Those renovations should be completed by the start of the fall 2006 sport season. The Northeast Super site will still be available for use by teams during this construction.

The other two Super Sites will be located at Simon Gratz High School, (Germantown and Hunting Park Avenues) and at the South Philadelphia/Bok High Schools (11th and Bigler Streets). Construction of the Gratz Super Site has begun and it should be ready for use by teams for the fall 2006 season. Phase I of the South Philadelphia/Bok High facility is scheduled to begin construction in early 2006 and should be completed by the start of the fall 2006 season.

The District is hoping to construct a fifth athletic Super Site in Philadelphia before 2008, but a location for that final site has not been selected.

The District will spend more than \$23 million on the overall renovation of the Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia, Northeast High School, Gratz and Bok/South Philadelphia High School Super Sites.

Phase II of the Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia Athletic Super Site will include the renovation or rebuilding of the site's concession/community building, restrooms, ticket booth, upgraded parking facilities and moving the Ben Johnston monument to a more prominent location. Phase II construction is scheduled to start in early 2006 and should be completed by the start of the fall 2006 sport season. The Germantown/Northwest Philadelphia Super Site will still be available for use by teams during Phase II construction.

During the 2005-06 school year, the School District of Philadelphia will have more than 660 sports teams, including varsity, junior varsity, middle school sports and chess clubs. The District has more than 10,000 student athletes who participate in athletics during the course of a school year.

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