

**Class of 2005 Wins Alumni Softball Tourney
by Tom Donnelly
Versailles High School Alumni Association**



You had to be there! That is what continuously ran across social networks via Facebook, text, and Twitter. Too bad I wasn't. A recurring back problem has kept me bed-ridden for about two weeks now. And I now realize that I missed one of the biggest events of the year.

The Inaugural Versailles Alumni Association Softball Tournament (yes, there will be more--already on the schedule for the next three years) was held over this past weekend at our local K of C softball complex.

A pair of fairly recent graduating classes met in the Final on Sunday evening, with the Class of 2005 getting the best of a very good 2006 squad. In all, there were more than twenty teams entered, with a number of those being composed of two or three classes that could not field a team by themselves.

That many teams alone would have made for a good crowd, but what ensued as a result might best be described as a "flash mob." Early reports coming through to my iPhone told of a packed parking lot and cars all along 47 almost all the way back to town. There were even campers parked behind the outfield fence. About all that was missing were Lee Corso and Kirk Herbstreit with the crew from College GameDay. You had to be there!

This article will be somewhat void of the details of the actual games due to the fact that most of my sources are still "recovering" from the weekend. Perhaps a follow-up story will surface in the near future. In the meantime, here are some tidbits:

1. The Versailles Athletic Boosters, led by the inimitable Schuh & Schuh, Inc., must have made out like bandits! Carol e-mailed me that she was heading to Wal-Mart on Sunday to clean them out of the rest of their hot dog and hamburger buns. The Men of '84 had already donated and roasted a hog for the occasion, but that was long gone, along with all the shredded chicken. I guess people just had to make do with the seven hundred+ pounds of hamburgers that were to be consumed over the weekend.
2. The Alumni Association sold the beer. Oh boy, did they sell the beer! The first night should have told the story. How many local organizations have the clout to get delivery on an emergency supply of seventy MORE cases of beer after 10:00 p.m.? Running out of beer at an event such as this could have caused a riot. All beer profits will be going to provide additional scholarships to future VHS graduates.
3. Local Boy Scout Troop 79 performed magnificently all weekend, doing an early morning cleanup of cans and debris. In addition to a well earned stipend, they also get to recycle the aluminum for their profit.
4. The Versailles Baseball Diamond Club took care of the 50/50 drawings and earned a nice piece of change for their troubles.
5. Entire families found their way out to the K of C. The organizers had arranged for DJ's to play music under a large tent, and this is where all the little kids could be found--dancing and jumping to the tunes being spun by Moose and Scooter. Hearing that took me back to the days when I played for a teachers' softball team in the old Friday Night League. Little kids had a ball out there. It is not always necessary to organize every activity for them. Keep an eye on them, but let them run around and invent their own fun. We always did.
6. A few players from pre-1980 did manage to play a bit. They subbed in where needed due to injury or someone having to leave. Monday on Facebook, there were already new teams of "veterans" being formed for next year. Rumor has it that Bailey-Zechar or the Versailles Health Care Center might be asked to sponsor a team. ;)
7. There were 8 or 9 ball gloves left over after everyone had finally gone home. Call Holly Keiser if you

are missing one. Or just show up next year. Leftovers will go into a box that will be brought to the next tourney.

8. The action got so wild that even athletically challenged Katie Davis Deland managed to score a run. Perhaps she was able to elude the tag as a result of a massive pileup along the first base line. No, I don't think she caused it. These games, reportedly, had all sorts of manic action--some of which demonstrated great skill, and some of which might be found at the other end of the athletic spectrum. There were injuries, of course, but not as bad as might be expected. Mostly, someone's pride was hurt as the inevitable gap between perceived and actual ability came into play. In the end, everyone just laughed it off. All in fun!

9. Brenda Batty York's team was matched up with son Aaron's class for one memorable game. Now daughter Kori can hardly wait until she is old enough to show Mom and Dad how the game should really be played.

10. One team requested that the old whirlpool be brought over from the football field and set up under the tent. Fundraiser next year?

11. The comment that best sums up what this was all about was this: It was Poultry Days without the non-Versailles people.

So who actually ran this extravaganza? One thing for certain--it was not this writer. I receive way too much undeserved credit for things that go on around here where all I had in it was to write a few articles. For this particular event, I also posted it on my Facebook Wall, prompting about three months of questions, comments, and general trash talk. For some, this must have meant that I was in charge. Thankfully, no, I was not.

The guys who actually ran the softball part of the tournament were Eric Pepple and Matt Barton. These two enterprising yet laid-back men made out the contact lists, drew the brackets, arranged for umpires, lined the fields, created some neat rules to encourage safe and fair play, handled any and all disputes, and kept the tournament moving at a fan-friendly pace. Great job, guys!

The entire weekend was a bee hive of activity. And everyone knows that every hive must have its queen. (She will probably kill me for that one.) This event has been a dream of Holly Baltes Keiser for years. Holly knows a lot about hosting large public gatherings. She has been one of the main movers and shakers for the quadrennial All-Class Reunion on Labor Day weekend. She was instrumental in making last year's FareFest such a big hit. She knew pretty much how to jump through all the necessary hoops to make it work. Except for one thing--the softball part. When Eric and Matt stepped forward and said they would take care of that part, it was just a matter of time.

Two of Holly's pet organizations were brought on board early on--the Alumni Association to sponsor the event and the Athletic Boosters to provide the concession stand. Once those commitments had been obtained, she methodically tackled detail after detail. The site, the permits, the tents, the beer, and much more. Holly, as well as the many others who stepped to the plate when needed, were not looking for any personal gains. This was for the people of the Versailles community. The profits will be split fairly among the aforementioned charitable groups. It all goes to our kids anyway. That's the way it's done around these parts.

The Queen and her two drones (now I will have those two guys to deal with, as well) are probably not going to be very happy when they see that they have been singled out for recognition here. That is not what they wanted, and they even asked not be so honored. However, sometimes a guy's gotta do what a guy's gotta do. Each of the three stressed that most of the time over the weekend, they were not doing much more than simply enjoying themselves. It seemed that every time something unexpected turned up, yet another volunteer stepped forward and said something to effect that "I'll take care of that for you. I'm not busy right now." So to all those unknown supporters who magically appeared every time they were needed--thank you!

With all the softball hoopla and my newly-found typing posture (lie on back, support laptop on chest with left hand, type with right index finger), I have been remiss in completing several other journalistic duties. Here is a very brief mention of just a few:

1. The Second Annual Versailles FareFest will take place under the big tents on West Main Street adjacent to Fountain Square on Saturday, August 28. Presale tickets are now available at The Inn. The base price for this all-one-cares-to-consume event is only \$40. Tickets at the door will be \$45. Fine wines and tasty beers will be brought in by restaurants, wineries, and beverage distributors from all over. Dozens of chefs will be demonstrating their considerable talents throughout the afternoon (3:00-6:00). Customers will more than their money's worth. This year, a special food-only ticket may be purchased for only \$20. Designed with the Designated Driver in mind, this ticket still allows all the food, ambience, and live music to be enjoyed without one having to pay for something that is not consumed.

2. That same day, the Friends of Hole Field, in cooperation with the Football Moms, will host the Annual Breakfast with the Tigers. (I know where at least two of my meals are coming from that day.)

3. Finally, the Versailles Alumni Association will be hosting its most popular attraction, the All-Class Reunion, over the entire Labor Day weekend. Activities at this event are far too numerous to mention here. It will be a blast! V-town knows how to party and support worthy causes at the same time.

You just have to be there!