



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Ayer Shirley Regional School District Receives Pledge of One-Half Million Dollars to the Athletic Fields Upgrade Project from the Norton Family Foundation

The Ayer Shirley Regional School District is proud to announce a pledge of one-half million dollars to the athletic fields upgrade project from Rob and Janice Norton and the Norton Family Foundation. The Norton family has deep roots in Ayer and Shirley. Robert was raised in Ayer, while Robert's wife, Janice, was born and raised in Shirley. Rob and his sister Martha graduated from Ayer High School as did Rob's wife Janice. Rob's father, Harold G. Norton was Superintendent of Schools for Ayer, Shirley, Boxborough, and Fort Devens from 1944 to 1967. While their college years and careers have taken them around the world, the Norton's still consider Ayer and Shirley "home."

"I know that my dad placed athletics in a special place in the educational process. Communication skills, leadership, perseverance, and judgement are just a few of the things taught on the field or court. My dad coached in his early career and always expected those who played individual and team sports would learn life lessons of great value. In his case, an athletic scholarship for a 16 year old high school graduate in rural Maine, too young to apply to college, got him to prep school and then Bates College, the first in his family to attend college. Our extended family has followed en masse with plenty of athletic accomplishments as well. I think he would be proud!"

"Participation in athletics provides an opportunity for student-athletes to create lifetime relationships and develop into our future leaders. The personal development and skills such as teamwork, strategy, and communication these young men and women will learn through participation in athletics will help prepare them to contribute to society in a thoughtful and lasting way," said Mr. Norton.

“I also think that athletics have helped to bond our communities. In my day the teammates from Ayer and Shirley achieved many successes and created friendships that have endured to this day. The project that is before our communities will go along way to insure that our communities remain one.”

Robert and Janice Norton are both proud student-athlete alumni of Ayer High School, and believe their pledge will benefit generations of student-athletes who call the Ayer Shirley Regional School District “home”. The Norton family has followed the project since its early stages and believes their commitment will inspire other alumni, individuals, and organizations to make a contribution to the athletic fields upgrade project.

The Ayer Shirley Regional School District extends its sincere gratitude and thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Norton for their generous contribution to the fields upgrade project. The student-athletes in the Ayer Shirley Regional School District will continue to thrive and flourish for many years to come.

Renovations to the Harold G. Norton Football Field, Rita Briggs Softball Field, running track, and the remainder of the fields at Ayer Shirley Regional High School will create a modern athletic facility that compliments the high school completed in 2015 and will serve students for the next 50 years as did the field that is there today. Parties interested in pledging support for the field upgrade project should contact mtowne@asrsd.org, or 978-772-8600 x1508. All donors will be recognized on our Donor Wall, which will be designed and installed after completion of the project.

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