

BOOSTING SCHOOL SPORTS

All of Lakota East's athletic teams have various needs in their respective seasons. These needs are often covered by the East athletic boosters.

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A gavel bangs inside room 200; the Lakota East Boosters are calling their meeting to order. They meet the second Monday of every month in order to discuss their finances and future plans to help benefit the athletic programs at Lakota East High School.

The boosters are headed by first year President Andrea Peake who took over after former President Jeff Harper handed over the position due to his youngest son graduating from East.

Getting elected onto the board is as simple as waiting for a position to open up and raising your hand, but actually serving in the role takes so much more than that.

"You have to have an interest in making this program be so big," Peake told Spark. "You have to be willing to have [the athletes] in the forefront and know that you're trying to do the best for them."

Taking the role of president of the boosters is not an easy job, but it is a rewarding one. Peake has been a member of the boosters since her daughter was in eighth grade.

One of her biggest accomplishments was organizing "Volley for the Cure," a volleyball event put on by East in order to raise money and awareness for breast cancer. Her organization of volley for the cure is one of her most successful projects, and is partially why she is looked upon as such a strong leader for the group.



Freshman Liam Kuhn swims backstroke.

The organization is responsible for nearly every purchase for all of East's athletic teams. They organize meetings with all of their sport representatives, who show up for meetings during their respective sporting seasons.

The setting is more casual than some might expect, but for the personalities of everyone involved, this laid-back style just fits.

Arguments rarely get out of hand, if they occur at all, and everyone is respectful as the different representatives go around the room and share the recent events of their team's success.

During this time, different teams are able to request things like equipment, team dinners and other resources.

"The coaches go to their rep, and that rep passes us the information on what they want, as far as whatever that request would look like," Peake says.

This is the most common way, but sometimes coaches sit in on the meetings as well.

"Sometimes they'll come to the meetings and present what they are looking for to make sure that goal or object of what they're looking for gets across well," Peake says.

After the idea is brought to the group they will hold a vote to make sure that it gets approved.

One of the main areas of importance when ensuring approval is the treasury department consisting of Matt Bachman and Kevin Cooney.

As the treasury department, they are in charge of all of the funds as well as what comes in and what goes out. Bachman and Cooney split the role 50/50 with one being in charge of the incoming funds, and one being in charge of the outgoing funds.

"We split it in two to have a kind of checks and balances in a sense," Bachman told Spark.

According to Bachman, this checks and balances system keeps the finances in check all of the time, makes sure that nothing gets messed up, and ensures the organization adheres to all

of the rules and regulations.

In addition, Bachman and Cooney have an outside accountant who helps manage the books. This accountant also makes sure that everything is tax compliant when they get audited.

All of this money has to come from someplace, though. The boosters have many different ways they raise money, including working with a group called All-Star gaming.

All-Star gaming offers scratch-off and pull-tab tickets that they sell in different machines which help raise money for different organizations, including the boosters.

"They'll do promotional games of chance, if you will, that are out sold in retail," Bachman says. "The proceeds from that go to the boosters."

In addition to using All-Star gaming, the boosters also raise money with different fundraisers including the Booster Bash.

"That's just a way for people to come and hang out for the night at a restaurant," Bachman says. "This year we did Grain Works, so we rent the place out for the night, we have some fun games for people, we also do basket raffles."

The booster bash is one of the biggest fundraisers for the boosters, and parents from all of East's athletic teams are invited to come out and support the programs.

The boosters also raise money with things like concessions at sporting events, and booster memberships that are available to all East athletic parents. These memberships are sold in yearly and lifetime plans.

All of the money the boosters raise goes into supporting both athletic teams and purchases for them, as well as different facility upgrades and larger items that the school can continue to benefit from and use for multiple sports and events.

Some of these larger facilities upgrades include things like a new video screen on Main

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Street which offers information on all of East’s athletic teams, the ticket booth outside of the football stadium, upgrades to East’s weight room, and one of their newest big purchases: the Noah shot trackers for the men’s and women’s basketball teams.

For these bigger items, they are typically planned out months or years in advance so the organization can put aside money specifically for those items.

This planning process happened most recently with the new vans that were bought by the program.

This purchase was split, with the East athletic department paying for half and the boosters paying for half.

“That was something we were in a position that we had really saved for quite some time with all the funds we’d raised over the previous 12 months,” Bachman says.

The boosters are able to work hand in hand with the athletic staff to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Peake was especially happy to be working with Lakota East Athletic Director Jill Meiring.

“It’s almost like that girl power moment where she knew I was going to eventually try to take over as president and she’s like, ‘listen, we can make this happen,’” Peake says.

There is a clear love for the school, their athletic teams, and all of the kids playing on them.

“We all have that same vision and we want to make sure the kids do well and advance as best as possible,” Peake says. “[Meiring is] fantastic. Put that in really large words. She is like the best athletic director out there.”

This love goes both ways, as the athletic staff enjoys working with the boosters as well. Meiring is present at the meetings and is able to provide input on future plans and ideas.

“The impact the boosters have on Lakota East is phenomenal,” Meiring told Spark. “They are crucial to us being able to run a successful and top-notch athletic department. None of the booster members get paid for their position in the group and they are selfless in their efforts because they love Lakota East.”

This success and communication is what plays to the boosters success. It allows them to provide opportunities for all of East’s student athletes. •

Senior Celina Blount attempts a free throw after practicing with the Noah shooting machines.

