26
3-18-06

March 10, 2006

The Honorable Bill Euille
Members of the Alexandria City Council
City Hall
301 King Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Mr. Mayor and Councilmembers:

We are writing to formally request that the City name the new soccer field behind George Washington Middle School *Swanson Field* in recognition of the enduring contributions this unique Alexandria family has made through soccer to our community. We believe they have been instrumental over the last 20 years in making soccer in our city the most inclusive activity outside of our public school system, so we ask you to take this formal action to honor the Swanson spirit so that a little bit of its Irish magic can be a part of us and Alexandria forever. We would request that you act quickly, as we would like to officially name the field this spring during TC William's and ASA's seasons.

There is no family that has done as much for the soccer community as the Swansons. Dad Swanson, Sandy, a T.C. graduate, devoted more than a decade of service to the Alexandria Soccer Association, where he became an essential architect in creating a new partnership with the City, from everything to working with the Council to enact ordinances to fence and protect existing fields, to setting in play a series of new fields—like Brenman Park, and vastly improved maintenance of existing fields. He oversaw the largest expansion, with the greatest diversity ever achieved, through an extraordinary outreach effort, clinics, and significant increases in the scholarship program. His wife, Mimi, has been an assistant coach, a T.C. soccer fundraiser, and a mother to a half team who have all not only played in ASA and varsity soccer at T.C., but made their own ongoing contributions to expanding opportunities in our city.

Kelley Swanson embodied the unique values this family has brought and continues to give to our community. A graduate of T.C. last June with her twin sister, she was the epitome of the very best of what our city is about—a commitment to help be a bridge to bring people together irrespective of ability or disability, race or income, age, or skill. Like A.E. Houseman's poem "To An Athlete Dying Young," Kelley has left an indelible mark on Alexandria—and, knowing Kelley, a challenge to all of us to enrich and further the dreams she sought. Or, as Kelley also wrote: "my ultimate rush for soccer is not restricted to my own games. Others may have severe disabilities. I intend to give my best to all of them, because I have learned that young people, given the chance, deserve to experience the adrenaline rush."

Between us, we have played, coached, refed, or been spectators at soccer events at fields at George Washington for over 30 years, and the fields have never had a name. Today, thanks to families like the Swansons, some 2000 kids of every age and with the greatest diversity of any non-school activity in the city play this global game. They come from every Alexandria neighborhood, from every school, from every physical ability and disability, and from various countries to play together. They are young enough to find delight in looking for four leaf clovers during the game and old enough to demonstrate extraordinary skills. None of that would have been possible without the leadership of Mimi, Sandy, and their kids—they have created a legacy, and endowed the rest of us—and our city—with the opportunity to be stewards of their gifts, commitments, and contributions for the years ahead. We ask for your support and would be pleased to meet with you or respond to any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Dana Lawhorne

Kerry Donley

Frank Shafroth