

# How School Field Was Saved

As School Field gains a new name and \$1.2 million in improvements, we look back on this local landmark's history



On the East edge of downtown South Bend next to Jefferson Intermediate School sits a massive athletic structure today known as TCU School Field. Anyone who drives North on Eddy Street will recognize the painted “Welcome to School Field” sign — but many don’t know the field’s specific purpose or how it came to be.

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## An All-City Field 🏈

The South Bend Community School Corporation has had an athletic facility on the site since somewhere in the late 1920s/early 1930s. The original seating deck on the North side of the field was built in the '30s, and much larger South side bleacher deck, which holds the sign, was built after WWII in 1947. At the time both sides were made of concrete and had their own press box on top.



1958 Undefeated State Champions South Bend Central Defense, posted by Mason Lane in History of South Bend/Mishawaka group on Facebook

**CENTRAL BEARS**

**VS**

**ADAMS EAGLES**



**October 4, 1958**

**School Field**

**10c**

Vintage program from a 1958 local matchup at School Field

All of the city high schools played their home football games at School Field during the '30s thru to the late '60s when Jackson Field was built as a second facility and Clay Field was incorporated into the city's school system.

The original seating deck on the North side was torn down in the '70s, creating the need for a motivated group of community members to step in and improve the field. This group, including Edwin Ehlers, referred to by South Bend Central High basketball coach John Wooden as “one of the finest high school athletes that I ever had the privilege of coaching,” formed to fund a new north side bleacher deck and an East end building holding restrooms, concessions, and locker rooms.

## Boosters

By the '80s the School Field complex was in danger of being demolished and reconstructed as a service facility and bus parking lot. A local business man and Riley graduate, Louis Baker, formed a committee to address fundraising for a project aimed at a single objective: save the stadium. This committee's efforts proved worthwhile and the field was saved from the wrecking ball.

After their success, this newly formed and energized committee needed to adopt a broader focus for building up the school corporation, resulting in the election of Edwin Ehlers as Chairman and incorporation as an Indiana non-profit organization.

A few years into this group's work they faced another obstacle—being called “Boosters” often led to the belief that the organization focused entirely on athletics. To change this perception, the Boosters organized as the [Alumni Association](#) in 1989 and named Joseph S. Fragomeni, Sr. as its first chairman. In 1994, the Boosters and Alumni Association merged under the name South Bend Alumni Association, with Mr. Fragomeni serving as Chairman until 2000.

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## A New Era 📍

In April 2018 the South Bend School Board unveiled a [\\$1.2 million improvement project](#) for the complex including new artificial field turf and new lighting. This project, similar to past efforts to improve the field, promises to bring the community together as all of the four South Bend high schools will once again be invited to play their home games on the new field.

On top of the structural improvements the corporation recently announced another major change—a new name. In response to a [\\$300,000 gift](#) from Teachers Credit Union, the field will now be named TCU School Field.

[TCU gains naming rights to School Field](#)

[SOUTH BEND - A \\$300,000 gift from Teachers Credit Union means historic School Field will be renamed TCU School Field...www.southbendtribune.com](#)

## The Big Give!

The South Bend Alumni Association continues today with a mission of supporting education in our schools by funding extra- and co-curricular activities that are not tax funded and by instilling an awareness of the need for student service in the community. The association funds projects at all South Bend public schools for a wide variety of groups including marching bands, drama clubs, football teams, and robotics teams.

This month is The Big Give, a fundraiser aimed solely at supporting extracurricular activities in South Bend schools. With each donation, you have the opportunity to vote for your favorite school—the school with the most votes will receive \$500 towards their extracurricular programming!

To cap off The Big Give the Alumni Association is throwing a celebration event where it all started—South Bend's School Field. Alumni, parents, and students of all South Bend schools are invited to join us and see the newly improved field 🎉