

# Pilot Club awards grant to aid disabled kids program

By McHugh David The Livingston Parish News | Posted: Thursday, March 14, 2013 12:00 am

WALKER — The Pilot Club of Denham Springs presented a \$1,000 matching grant to the Walker Parks and Recreation Service Monday night to support a program benefitting youths with disabilities.

The Pilot Club will match Walker Parks and Recreation dollar-for-dollar to support the idea it pitched to the Pilot Club last fall.

“We met with Tracy and Darren Blevin from Walker Parks about the Challenger Program,” said Sybil Wallendal, presenter of the grant. “We liked what we heard and began work on putting together the information to present to our national wing.”

The Challenger Program, or the Challenger Division of Little League Baseball, gives youth with disabilities a chance to participate in team sports, providing them with much needed social benefits in an atmosphere catered to their individual needs.

The team is available to girls and boys ages 4-18 (up to 21 if still in school).

The grant will be used to purchase basic equipment including helmets and other protective gear, balls, bats, tees, bases, and gloves.

Pilot Club members will be active in the entire process. They will help shop for gear for the kids, attend games, execute volunteer work on the field, and provide safety information regarding brain injuries.

The Anchor Club of Denham Springs, the student division of the Pilot Club, will also volunteer to be “buddies” for every enrolled youth in the program.

The Pilot International Foundation, originator of the \$1,000 grant, is also ready to donate \$15,000 dollars to Walker Parks and Recreation to build a new stadium.

The City of Walker is ready to match that \$15,000 and has lofty goals for the facility.

“We’re looking past a \$30,000 field to something larger,” said Mayor Rick Ramsey.

However, the Pilot Club had stipulations, stating that fields must be available for Challenger play during the recreational season, when Walker usually holds baseball tournaments.

“Beginning in 2014, when recreational season begins, there will be no outside tournaments at the Walker facility,” said Ramsey.

It took roughly six months for the first grant to be processed, from the original meeting to presentation at Walker’s monthly meeting.

The current goal for the new stadium is sometime in 2014.