



Bearcat Football C.L.A.W.

COMMUNITY LONG-TERM ATHLETIC AND WELLNESS

The Branson School is asking for your help to realize the vision of the **Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. (Community Long-term Athletic and Wellness) Project**. This project will consist of a new artificial turf football field, a walking path, and a shaded structure to be used for community gatherings and outdoor classrooms.

The new football field will allow Branson to continue to host home football games, which are the tentpole community events in Branson, a town too small to support a gas station or cafe. The walking path will allow community members of all ages and all physical fitness levels to have a safe, level walking surface to improve their cardiovascular health. The shaded structure will provide new opportunities for family gatherings, outdoor classroom sessions, FFA and 4H leadership events and contests, and large outdoor community events such as concerts and movie nights.

This packet contains details about the Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project, the associated fundraising campaign, and the impacts of the Branson School in its immediate and extended community.



Bad News Becomes an Opportunity

On December 9th, 2020, a group of opposing football coaches unexpectedly announced that they would no longer play on Branson's football field, citing concerns for player safety on Branson's "rough" football field. As we face the possibility of losing home football games, which have been the largest and best received community events in decades, the Branson School has decided to turn this bad news into an opportunity to not only provide a first-class athletic field for Bearcat Football, but to also create a multi-generational facility to help build and enhance the wellness of the school and the community.

Branson Needs Much More Than a Football Field

Although life in a small town is wonderful in many ways, there are five community health and wellness concerns that the Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project will help rectify.

1. There are no safe, even walkways in Branson for people of all ages to enjoy.

There are no sidewalks in Branson and the only paved street goes from the two-lane highway to the school parking lot. Walking along the highway can be a treacherous experience as many truckers look to speed through town to bypass weigh stations on the interstate. The town's dirt streets are an unwalkable muddy mess with any amount of moisture. A key element of the Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project will be an even, compacted gravel walking trail from the school parking lot around the perimeter of the football field. This will allow anyone to park their car and walk an even and safe quarter-mile loop.



2. There are no safe, shaded outdoor areas in Branson for family or community gatherings. Branson has a wonderful school playground that is open to the public, but there are no shade structures to help escape the summer heat. There are two small, covered picnic areas next to the town's historic two-room jail, but those picnic areas are only 20 feet from the busy highway, which is not a safe place for children to play. The Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project will have a covered, shaded structure that will be large enough for families or groups to gather for picnics, birthday parties, or reunions. The Branson School will also be able to use the shaded structure as an outdoor classroom, allowing the students to learn in the fresh air while avoiding dangers of prolonged sun exposure.

3. There are no large outdoor venues for community gatherings in Branson. For large community events, Branson's only option is currently the Branson School gymnasium, so large events must be indoors-only. The artificial turf field built as part of the Bearcat

Football C.L.A.W. Project will be able to serve as a safe, easily walkable, level, large wide-open space for concerts, dances, weddings, graduation ceremonies, science experiments, community celebrations, and FFA and 4H leadership training events and competitions. The bleachers purchased as part of the program will be movable, which will allow the field to be configured for a myriad of different community activities.



4. There is also a very limited water supply in Branson. Branson does not have enough water for the town residents, the school, the cattle (which the town is also legally obligated to provide), and a lush grass football field. A 6-man football field requires 61,000 gallons of water every other day, which equates to 920,000 gallons of water per month. Branson’s water sources, five small springs nestled along the mesas south of town, only produce 14,000 gallons of water per day. The artificial turf field installed as part of the Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project is the only solution that will allow the town of Branson to have enough water for the school, its 49 residents, and the cattle that support the school’s ranching families.

5. Branson is a food desert. Branson is located 50 miles from Trinidad, Colorado, its closest source for groceries, and Branson’s high plains desert climate and limited rainfall (only 16 inches per year) does not allow for farming. In the past 5 years that Branson has had a football team, town residents have been asked to seriously limit the size of their gardens so that more water could be used on the football field. The artificial football field of the Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project would free up a significant amount of water, which would allow the town residents to start and expand gardens, as well as opening possibilities for larger community-based or school-based gardening projects to supply Branson residents and students with fresh vegetables and produce.

Project Budget: \$450,000

Turf Field Construction	\$350,000
Shaded Structure	\$13,000
Walking Path	\$5,000
Goal Posts	\$7,000
Scoreboard.....	\$20,000
Railing/Fencing	\$9,000
Announcer Booth	\$30,000
Bleachers	\$16,000



The Community Is Already Invested

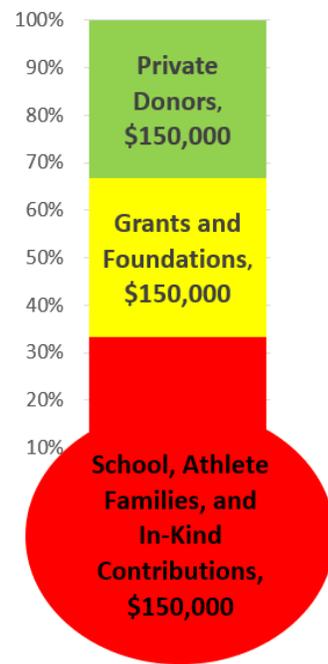
The Branson Football C.L.A.W. Project has already seen an incredible amount of support and commitment from the Branson students, parents, and community. Immediately after hearing the “bad news,” a group of Branson students made a funny, cute video asking for help. A local business owner saw that video and offered over \$50,000 of in-kind contributions to help build the goal posts, announcer’s booth, and fencing around the field. More local contractors have offered very generous in-kind contributions to build the base of the field. The 21 families of the Bearcat Football team pledged \$11,000 in only five days. For communities as small and remote as Branson and Kim, Colorado, those figures are astounding.

How We Will Fund the Rest of the Project

The first third of the funding will consist of Branson School's financial contribution, In-Kind contributions, and financial contributions from the Branson families and community.

The second third of the funding will consist of funding from grants and foundations. The Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project is a natural fit for groups such as the El Pomar Foundation, Great Outdoors Colorado, the Broncos Community Grant Program, the Daniels Fund, and the Gates Foundation.

The final third of the funding will come from large private donors or corporate sponsors. Although Branson is a very remote community, it is a very ruggedly beautiful place that attracts affluent hunters and landowners who have a place in their heart for our town.



Timetable for Accomplishing the Project Objectives

- January 1, 2021 – Fundraising launch
- January 18, 2021. Initial project approval and district funding commitment from Branson School Board
- January 19, 2021 - Begin foundation and grant applications
- February 15, 2021 – Final project approval from Branson School Board
- February 16, 2021 - Submit foundation and grant applications
- February 22, 2021 – Contract in place with turf installation company
- March through April 2021 – Field construction begins
- May or June 2021 – Field construction complete
- Summer 2021 – Walking path, shaded structure, announcer booth, fencing complete

How We Will Measure Success

The completion of the Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project will enhance the physical and mental health of the Branson community as well as improve the educational and athletic experience of the Branson School and Kim School students. In the months and years following project completion, we will see

- Senior citizens, families, and students improve their cardiovascular health on the walking path
- Outdoor class sessions held on the new athletic field and in the new shaded structure
- Offerings of new varsity sports such as soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, or ultimate frisbee
- Four or five home football games every Fall
- Football practices on the newly constructed field with a reduced chance of player injury
- Community events such as concerts, graduation ceremonies, weddings, leadership workshops, sports camps, family reunions, picnics, and outdoor movie nights
- An increase in student enrollment, which will increase employment opportunities and retain teachers
- Increased community involvement in school and civic activities
- A new commitment from the community to continually improve the school and its facilities



A Brief History of the Town of Branson and the Branson School

The town of Branson was established in 1910 as a stop on the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail and saw a boom-and-bust pattern throughout the majority of the early 1900's. Impacts of drought, men serving World War II, and change of lifestyle due to the modern age have all resulted in hardship to the small town. However, the majority that did homestead during the booming era continue their traditions of ranching in the area, families of which still reside in or near Branson.

The Branson School was originally a two-room schoolhouse founded in 1918. The school moved into its current two-story brick home in 1923. The basketball gym was built in the 1950s and was used up until the 1990s. In 2001, the school added a 6-classroom multi-purpose building and outdoor basketball court.

A Small Economy

The economy of Branson has not changed much since its ranching beginnings. Cattle ranching families still send their children to school in Branson, but many of those ranches have had to diversify to other ventures such as guided hunting to stay afloat. The Branson School and Las Animas County are the largest employers in Branson. Economically, the Branson School District is one of the poorest school districts in Colorado. In terms of property valuation, the district ranks 168th out of 178 districts. The students of Branson come from simple means: 51% of the students qualify for free or reduced meals.

A Tradition of Academic Excellence

Despite its humble beginnings, Branson has continued to provide an excellent education that extends beyond its district boundaries, attracting many out of district students. 79% of Branson's students are out of district students, many of them riding a school bus over 100 miles every day. Branson currently has 74 students enrolled K-12 and has shown an increasing trend the last three years. The school has seen a positive pattern of graduation rate with 100% over the last 5 years. In recent years, Branson has produced regional, state, and national winners in FFA contests, science fairs, and BEST robotics competitions. After graduation, Branson students are equipped to take their next steps into college, trade schools, the military, or the workforce.

A Bright Vision for the Future

As we look to the future, the Branson School will continue to equip and prepare its students to be productive, innovative, and creative members of their communities. The newly constructed facilities from the Bearcat Football C.L.A.W. Project will help attract and retain new students, which will in turn help attract and retain teachers and school employees. Senior citizens, children, and families will be able to use the safe, level walking path and see their hearts become healthier without concerns about muddy roads or traffic. As the community benefits from the events, gatherings, and memories made at our new facility, momentum will grow for more groundbreaking growth initiatives for Branson. As these benefits are seen in the increased wellness and vibrance of the community, more families will be drawn to move to Branson to be a part of something special.

Branson's reputation as having the worst football field in Colorado will fade into a distant memory as the new reality of Branson's passion for complete community physical, mental, and social wellness becomes a model for small town America.

Get Involved Today!

Visit bransonschooldistrict.com/football today to learn more, make a financial pledge, and share our story!



PLEDGE FORM

PLEASE MAIL OR SCAN/EMAIL THIS FORM TO BRANSON SCHOOL

Branson School, 101 Saddle Rock Dr, Branson, CO 81027 or pledge@bransonschoolonline.com

I/We Pledge to make a gift to the Branson School to benefit the Bearcat Football

C.L.A.W Project in the following amount: \$ _____

as (please select one) a one-time payment or two payments over two years.

Signature: _____

Personal Gift

Corporate Gift

Company/Organization (If Applicable): _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

For Donor Recognition, I understand my name/company name will be listed as I have written

I wish to remain anonymous

My gift is in Honor/Memory of: _____

Please make checks payable to Branson School. In the memo line, write "Football Field."

Credit Card (Visa, Mastercard, Amex, Discover- Please Circle One)

CC# _____ Exp date: _____ CSV: _____

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____ Date: ___/___/___

Branson School is a tax-exempt organization