

By Cary Osborne
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Space is now at a premium for youth football teams in and around the Santa Clarita Valley. Three teams practice within 100 yards of space, said Derik Hixon, president of the Santa Clarita Valley Athletic Association Board of Directors.

The solution, he said, lies just outside of Saugus in Tesoro Del Valle.

But there is a problem.

A 12.4 acre piece of land was donated four years ago by Southern California Edison with the intent of using it for the Pacific Youth Football League's three local chapters.

That land has still not been used.

The delay of putting in four fields, restroom facilities and a parking lot has been because of a lack of funding.

The non-profit PYFL relies on fundraising for equipment and space rental.

But the cost to convert the dirt into fields will take a lot more than candy bar sales.

The price tag for the conversion is budgeted, Hixon said, at \$2.5 million.

Hixon said the organization has approached the city and county to help with funding, but has been turned down.

At this point, the hope is that the PYFL's Super Bowl, which will be held Dec. 1 at College of the Canyons and will showcase the league's eight best teams, will raise some funds and awareness about the league.

League president Rett Hicks said the valley landing the Super Bowl is pretty significant.

There are 4,000 football players in the league that spreads from Burbank to Ventura. In the Santa Clarita Valley, there are 41 youth tackle football teams with 1,025 players ages 7 to 14.

The league also has 250 cheerleaders.

The three chapters in the SCV are the SCVAA Warriors, Canyon Country Outlaws and Castaic/Stevenson Ranch Cougars.

With the numbers this high, the organization has overcrowded its practice sites, which include Central Park in Saugus and Hart High, and has had to split up practice times.

This has proved inconvenient for families who have more than one child playing.

Making things more complicated, Hixon said, is the organization is running out of time.

The lease for the land is \$1 per year for 99 years. But the landowners must see progress within 18 months after the beginning of construction.

Patience of area residents, Hixon adds, is running thin.

"It's been four years and nothing has happened. The natives are sort of getting restless," Hixon said.

"If I don't sign a lease agreement by January 2008, this deal could go away."

Hicks said more than a 1,000 people are expected to attend the Super Bowl, which is the PYFL's largest source of fundraising.

Without corporate affiliation, the league said it's in need.

"It's never guaranteed that we're going to have a facility from year to year," Hicks said. "We need desperately to build this property. We need a home."