

**Executive Summary**

***Proposal Summary:***

Memphis Bears, Inc. (MBI) requests consideration of sponsorship to assist with the costs of completing MBI’s *Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams/Field of Dreams* Project Phase 1. To show our appreciation for your support, MBI would provide you with a set of premium-level benefits tailored to meet your marketing needs. Full lists of options are attached to this proposal. The volunteer-operated organization, MBI is raising funds to build Phase 1 of the *Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams/Field* *of Dreams.* The facility will serve as a safe haven for low income, at risk youth of Memphis, Tennessee. Youth will utilize the facility to participate in athletic events, receive academic training and become involved in community service projects, such as beautification projects; Feed the Need and Habitat for Humanity. Funds for this project will be generated from fees through the organization’s athletic programs, tournaments and special events, as well as funds raised through the organization’s Capital Campaign. The Campaign includes a detailed plan to garner funding from the community, organization’s board members, corporations, grants and other funder opportunities.

***About Memphis Bears Inc.:***

Since 1996 MBI has served the Frayser/Raleigh/North Memphis communities through a variety of award-winning programs servicing youth ages 5-12 and 13-15 through our Teen Assistant Program. We are the only organization in our community offering these programs in one of the lowest-income, highest-crime neighborhoods in the City of Memphis. Frayser, a 24-square-mile section of North Memphis, Tennessee, is known locally as ***“the place where the killers hang.”***

***Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams/Field of Dreams:***

Youth violence in Memphis Tennessee has reached an all-time high, significantly in the Frayser/Raleigh/North Memphis communities. In an effort to redirect some of this alarming trend and the drastic increase in violent youth crime, Memphis Bears, Inc. (MBI) will create the *Field of Dreams*. Our focus area; Frayser, is a 24-square mile section of North Memphis is one of the lowest-income, highest crime neighborhoods in the city.

The total cost of the *Field of Dreams* Phase I Project is $1.1 million dollars. Currently we own 2.75 acres of undeveloped property which we hope to transform into an approximately 58,000 square foot artificial turf field, which includes the installation of lighting, fencing, score board, playground/basketball court, concession building and parking space. Having our own "home field" to host athletic events for the Frayser/Raleigh/North Memphis communities will enable MBI to have a reliable refuge for our youth to engage in sports and additional programs even before the completion of Phase II, the *Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams*.

***Partnership with Memphis Bears Inc.***

This potential partnership with Hollywood is a natural fit. We know of your reputation of making a difference throughout the City of Memphis. We look forward to beginning a partnership with you as we implement the *Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams/Field of Dreams*.

***Leadership:***

MBI is led by Memphis Police Department Sgt. Craig Littles, who is the Founder and CEO and a proud product of the Frayser community, which he has served since childhood. In addition to founding the organization, Sgt. Littles has been a member of the Memphis Police Department for over 25 years. He has received recognition for his volunteer work, including numerous awards such as the American Institute of Community Service, Shelby Youth Sports coach of the Year 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008, United Way Volunteer Mid-South, City of Memphis Ovation Award, Tri-State Defender Newspaper Man of Excellence Award. A Board of Directors also governs the volunteer-run organization.

***Key Audiences:***

The key audiences reached include:

* Parents
* Youth age 5-12
* Teens ages 13-15
* Frayser/Raleigh/North Memphis Community Members
* Members of the Memphis Community At-Large

**The goals of the organization are:**

* Preventing crime through after-school opportunities

• Discouraging gang and crime involvement of youth

• Exposing our youth to alternative environment

• Instilling character and positive self-esteem within our youth

• Infusing discipline and structure in our youth

The organization is credited with helping many youth survive the challenges that come from growing up in an area such as Frayser. One parent wrote, “*Both of my sons played football with the MBI. The team is very well organized and the parent participation is awesome. The staff/volunteers seemed to genuinely care about the kids on and off the field. This organization is more like a family rather than just a team. Kudos to the founder Craig Littles and the entire MBI staff! Keep up the good work in the community!”*

Memphis Bears Inc.’s goal is to increase the level of community and youth involvement in its surrounding neighborhoods. Our organization has served our community for 19 years. There has been a decline in community and youth participation due to lack of structured based activities, programs, and facilities. According to the 2013 Memphis Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 26% of school age boys and girls did not participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity, and 50% did not play on a sports team with their school or community groups. By the end of the first full year of existence of Phase I; Field of Dreams Project, the City of Memphis will see a 25% increase in these communities and youth levels of involvement in sports and structured activities the Frayser, Raleigh, and North Memphis areas.

MBI is committed to helping youth negotiate these challenges. The organization’s mission is: “To empower, enhance, and enrich youth through education, discovery, and sports programs in a fun, safe, and exciting environment.” Memphis Bears Inc. currently serves more than 200-300 area Youth annually, compared with 27 youth during its first year of operation. It is entirely volunteer-run, with approximately 80 professional adult volunteers, college student volunteers, most with roots in the community and many of them teachers, police officers, military soldiers and other community leaders. The organization also has 15 teen volunteers.

Sports comprise 80% of the organization’s activity, and serves as a recruitment tool to bring youth into the organization. Memphis Bears’ activities include 5 sports, offered to both boys and girls, which take place on various athletic fields throughout the City Of Memphis. However, once the *MBI Youth Academy of Dreams* is built, youth will have access to after school tutoring, ACT preparation classes, community service activities, and leadership development through mentoring. Examples of community service include regular visits to the local nursing home, cleaning up the neighborhood, Habitat for Humanity’s Memphis City Beautiful and volunteering for Ronald McDonald House.

In pursuing its goals, the organization has built an excellent record of accomplishment of helping youth improve their lives, and assisting in protecting them from the neighborhood’s criminal element. In 2000, the organization received a Certificate of *Special Congressional Recognition and Invaluable Service to the Community* from Congressmen Harold Ford. MBI received the *National Jefferson Award* from the American Institute of Community Service in 2006, and in 2011 placed third from among 100 programs for *Volunteer Mid-South’s Program of the Year*. Several of the youth who have participated in the organization have received athletic scholarships to college, two of its athletes went on to play in the National Football League, one played on the University of Alabama Crimson Tide National Championship Team, and one was on the U. S. A. Under-15 National Football Team. Cordarrian Richardson, a former MBI athlete is currently rank #6 in his position, 4th in the state and 88th in the nation and rising according to scouting site such as RIVAL.COM, MaxPrep.com and ESPN.com. He has received several scholarship offers to colleges such as LSU, Alabama, Florida State and Tennessee just to name a few but has chosen Clemson Tigers. Trezevant High who won the 2015 2-A State Football Championship has several MBI athletes as key members of its team.

***The Need:***

Memphis Bears Inc. has served our community since 1996 and assist approximately 200-300 children annually, yet the organization has no central place where it can gather children and volunteers together, provide services, or maintain records, equipment or safe place to call home.

Currently, the organization conducts meetings in local restaurants, parking lots, the steps of the local school, and public libraries in volunteers’ homes, even a tent – anywhere safe we can find within the community. Not only can that become cumbersome and confusing, this practice can place children and volunteers in danger, given the high crime rate in the area. In addition, the funding that has gone to renting meeting spaces could have been better utilized to help youth through MBI programs. Because the low-income children served by the organization have limited access to transportation to points outside the community, it is necessary for meetings and programs to take place within the community. Except for the local school (which is usually booked with activities of its own and charges a fee when available), there is no secure indoor facility that will accommodate a large meeting.

MBI has therefore chosen to construct a new facility in Frayser. In addition to logistical concerns, having our own space will save approximately $10,000 each year on meeting space fees. This finding could be used for tutoring, athletic programs or other services that directly benefit youth. There is no non-profit organization in the community that can provide MBI the space it needs to hold group activities, meetings and community events. Most youth do not have readily available transportation, so it is not practical to hold activities outside of the community we serve. Youth growing up in Frayser/Raleigh/North Memphis areas face enormous challenges to their safety and well-being. Without the alternative support of MBI, many would not succeed in graduating from high school, avoiding gang involvement, or surviving in such a high-crime area.

Meeting at locations owned and operated by other organizations also creates a challenge for volunteers and participants when facilities close or become unavailable unexpectedly. This causes confusion as volunteers struggle to find replacement locations. In addition, the youth who participate are from low-income homes and most do not have cell phones, so communication is a challenge. Volunteers are then required to wait at the unavailable location until the last child arrives to inform the youth the activity has moved to a new location or to turn the child away because volunteers had to cancel an activity.

***The Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams:***



*The Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams/Field of Dreams* will be a youth empowerment, enhancement and enrichment academy in the Memphis Metro area. The program’s focus is to promote educational assistance, discovery skills, teen workforce development and youth sports participation. As the first and only facility of its kind in the Greater Memphis Metro area, we will draw upon a diverse population to provide a fun, safe, structured and unique environment where we will host youth events such as tutoring sessions, computer labs, life skill courses, recreational activities, sports therapy, athletic training and athletic competitions. Our facility will be open to the community and other organizations for meetings and other events that will promote positive and educational awareness to the community.

Evans, Taylor, Foster, Childress Architects has designed a facility that includes:

* Interior community space where children can meet for group activities
* A kitchen to provide meals/snacks
* 8 classrooms for computer training, homework assistance, ACT preparation classes, literacy programs and math tutoring
* A conference room for board meetings - This will be made available to other non-profits for meeting space, when available.
* Storage space for records and supplies
* Restrooms with showers for hygiene
* Parking spaces for staff

The first phase of the *Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams*/*Field of Dreams* project will cost $1.1 million, which includes the value of donated land (Anonymous), architectural fees (Mike Childress) and the clearing of the land (David Moore Construction). The facility will be centrally located in the heart of the Frayser community on 2.754 acres of land donated to the organization. The land, valued at $38,900, is located at 3258 Trezevant in the Graham Heights Subdivision near the local high school.



As part of this first phase, we are seeking commitments to help fund the installation of a new athletic artificial turf field located on our property. This funding will help us secure a major field grant from USA Football for $50,000. Contributions will be used to prepare the land, including building a drainage base, which will provide a level surface, and installation of the turf panels. We anticipate the turf lasting at least 12 years. The turf will also require significantly less and cheaper maintenance than a natural grass field. Having a “home field” to host athletic events on will enable us to have a reliable safe place for our youth to engage in sports even before the completion of the *Memphis Youth Academy of Dreams*. Like the *Academy*, the field will reduce both rental fees incurred by the organization and the number of logistical issues that our families will have to face.

***Project Time table:***

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| ***Design*** | ***Completed*** | ***Evans, Taylor, Foster, Childress Architects*** |
| ***Project Builder*** | ***Chosen*** | ***Jeff Barnes of Barnes and Brower Builder*** |
| ***Funding*** | ***January 2017*** | ***Donations, In-kind gifts*** |
| ***Zoning request*** | ***November 2016*** | ***Submit commercial zone request to Memphis/Shelby County Office of Planning and Developing: 35-75 days for approval*** |
| ***Building Permit*** | ***Jan 2017*** | ***Memphis/Shelby County Office of Planning and Development*** |
| ***Groundbreaking*** | ***January 2016*** | ***Public groundbreaking ceremony to thank supporters.*** |
| ***Completion*** | ***July 2017*** | ***Construction, weather permitting, to take six months.******Hold open house for publicity and to again thank supporters***  |

***Conclusion***
Memphis Bears, Inc. is grateful for the opportunity to present this proposal to you. It has been stated and proven that “an idle mind is the devils workshop”. In order to make sure that our youth are active and involved in something positive, MBI has committed to making sure that we give them an opportunity to be a part of a family in a safe environment and a place to call home. Your generous donation will be a triumph for all involved. Not only will it allow you the opportunity to give back to the community, but also you will be giving to an organization that has the youth at heart and is concerned about the whole child. We believe that by providing this donation to MBI, it will assist us in keeping the promise we have made to help our youth advance.

As we are about to celebrate 20 years of service in the Memphis Community and MBI will soon be able to see the benefits from the seeds sown and because of these opportunities given; it will ultimately help to deter crime in the Frayser and surrounding areas. Our payment structure and benefits are, as always open for discussion. We encourage and invite you to join us as a corporate partner in our efforts to support and change the lives of children in the Frayser/Raleigh/ North Memphis communities through our programs. We also look forward to collaborating with you and working with you for many years to come.

Memphis Bears Inc. is federally tax-exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue code. Contributions to our organization are tax deductible.

MBI is also a proud Gold Level Member of GuideStar USA, Inc. GuideStar is an information service specializing in reporting on U.S. nonprofit companies. In 2010, the GuideStar database contained over 5 million IRS 990 Forms on 1.9 million organizations.