

Post Star: Inmates refurbishing East Field bleachers (Moriah Shock)

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GLENS FALLS ▾ A section of East Field bleachers will look nicer and be more comfortable to sit on this season, thanks to a Moriah Shock Incarceration Facility inmate crew providing labor for a refurbishing project.

“These bleachers have been here for 35 years,” said Ben Bernard, owner of the Glens Falls Dragons, the Perfect Game Collegiate Baseball League team that opens its season June 2 at East Field.

A crew of 12 inmates began working Tuesday, unbolting the seat boards in the bleachers, flipping the boards over so the unworn side shows and bolting them back together.

“It’s a tough project. It’s a lot of work taking off all of those bolts and then flipping them,” Bernard said.

Correctional officers are supervising the inmates, who are nonviolent first offenders.

The correctional facility in Mineville, a hamlet in Essex County, houses non-violent offenders in a military boot camp-type program that involves exercise, physical labor, academics and substance abuse treatment.

The inmate crew will get as much work as possible done before the season, and eventually refurbish all of the bleachers.

“They’re going to work at least another week here and see how many we can get done,” he said. “And then come fall, they’re going to definitely come back.”

Bernard said he and city officials were brainstorming ways to refurbish the bleachers, when Lynn Laudermilch, who is helping with the team, looked underneath the bleachers and noticed the bottom of the 2-inch thick pressure-treated boards was still in good condition.

“He said, ‘Give me a couple of hours and let me see.’ And the next thing you know, it was feasible,” Bernard said.

New York State Correctional Officers & Police Benevolent Association, the union that represents state correctional officers, is one of the team’s sponsors this season, said Mike Mender, the city’s interim recreation superintendent.

NYSCOPBA members arranged with the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision to supply inmate labor, he said.

Civil Services Employees Association, the union that represents city Department of Public Works Employees, authorized the city to use inmate labor instead of DPW employees, Mender said.