

## Chris and Kelly's HOPE making great strides

Fitness park, Spirit Week and golf tournament all part of Steve Grant's plans for drug abuse foundation

By **JERRY SALLEY** | staff

Things have been moving quickly for Steve Grant in the past six months.

Since creating the Chris and Kelly's HOPE Foundation in March in honor of his two sons – who both died of accidental drug overdoses within the past five years – his organization is on track to achieve several milestones this year.

Not the least of these is the prospect of raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to help fight drug addiction in teenagers.

Chris and Kelly's HOPE operates under the auspices of the Community Foundation of Greenville and provides financial support to both local and national programs – “anybody who's worthy,” said Grant.

In early August, Grant announced plans to build the Chris and Kelly's HOPE Fitness Park on the Swamp Rabbit Trail between Furman and Travelers Rest. The park will be adjacent to the White Horse Academy, a 16-bed treatment facility for substance-addicted teenage boys. Run by the Phoenix Center, it is one of only two facilities in the state where a boy can be in treatment for up to 120 days, which has been proven to be a more effective treatment period than the standard 28 days.

The White Horse Academy residents will use the park in the mornings for their daily fitness workouts, said Grant. “It's been proven that they should have a certain amount of exercise each day while they're in rehab,”

he said. The park will feature several pieces of outdoor exercise equipment, such as horizontal bars, a chest press and lat pull, a pommel horse, push-up bars, a sit-up board and strength and stretch bars.

The park will be open in the afternoon to users of the Swamp Rabbit Trail, which is a “win-win,” said Grant, who points to a Furman University study that showed that 1,500 people will pass by the park every day. The Greenville County Recreation District will help to provide a short spur line linking the trail to the park, Grant said. The foundation plans to have the park open by December 2012.

More good news came when Greenville High School decided to dedicate its Spirit Week to Chris and Kelly's HOPE Foundation. Every year, the four largest schools in the Greenville area each choose a charity and compete during Spirit Week to raise the most money. In past Spirit Weeks, Greenville High has raised close to \$200,000. This year's Spirit Week runs from Sept. 1 to Sept. 7, capped off by the school's football game with Spirit Week rival JL Mann.

In late October, Grant will speak in the gym at Christ Church Episcopal School – where, years earlier, his oldest son Chris was a star athlete – to kick off the school's annual Red Ribbon Week, devoted to drug abuse prevention.

An extension of Red Ribbon Week will be the Red Ribbon Challenge, a golf tournament that was the brainchild of Alex Mahaffey, a CCES student and junior golfer. Grant said Mahaffey brought home an article one day that his youth minister had discussed – an article, coincidentally, about Chris and Kelly's HOPE that had appeared in the *Greenville Journal* in April.

“He said, ‘This is going to be my sophomore project at Christ Church. We're going to do a golf tournament for this foundation,’” including golfers from CCES and St. Joseph's Catholic School, Grant said.

“It's going to be a huge event, because not only is it associated with Christ Church and the Community Foundation and St. Joseph's High School, but I was so bold to ask Furman if they could use their golf course for nothing,” he said. “And they never do that.”

But Furman is making an exception in this case, Grant said.

“It's all coming together,” he said. “It's going to be neat. I think we can raise \$400,000 or \$500,000 in the fall and really be on our way.”

One drawback for Grant, a financial representative at Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance: “I'm having a hard time figuring out when to work. Which is a good problem, I guess.”

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