

'Wacky, brilliant' Mascot Hall of Fame coming to Whiting



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WHITING | It was deemed a pipe dream and a longshot as well as both wacky and brilliant, according to Mayor Joseph Stahura.

It's the National Mascot Hall of Fame, and it's coming to Whiting.

With a little help from nearly a dozen local and national sports mascots, Stahura and the city's partner in the venture, Raymond Entertainment Group, made the

announcement Wednesday at Oil City Stadium.

The 25,000-square-foot Hall of Fame building constructed of glass, steel and concrete is slated to open in 2017 at 119th and Front streets.

"I truly felt that the concept of bringing a world-class entertainment venue for people of all ages was a perfect fit for the city of Whiting," Stahura said. "I can only dream of what happens when you combine the wackiness and fun of Pierogi Fest with the flying fur and silly string of a group of entertaining mascots."

David Raymond, of the Raymond Entertainment Group and the Philadelphia Phillies mascot Phillie Phanatic for 17 years called Whiting "the silly, wacky city that could." He said it's a city that draws 250,000 people to Pierogi Fest and 100,000 to a Fourth of July parade that had Mickey and Minnie Mouse as grand marshals.

"I know Disney and they just don't send Mickey and Minnie to any city in this country," he said.

After the announcement, children in attendance had the chance to meet the mascots which included the Phillie Phanatic, Benny the Bull (Chicago Bulls), Southpaw (Chicago White Sox), Staley da Bear (Chicago Bears), Mr. Pig (Piggly Wiggly), the Crusader (Valparaiso University) and the NMHOF's Reggy.

The multimillion-dollar museum will include an interactive family fun zone with a range of exhibits, activities and events. Components may include a multipurpose theater space known as "The Fur-itorium" and a Science of Mascots "life experience" designed to make visitors feel what it might be like as a mascot performer.

Attractions may also include a Sky Zone with high-flying trampolines designed for visitors to feel what it's like to launch off into the air and dunk basketballs. A virtual Mascot Closet would offer visitors a chance to dress in their favorite mascot clothes.

Other components will include photos, artifacts and videos showcasing how many mascots became part of the fabric of sports in America and a "Did You Know" large interactive touch screen program that will walk visitors through an animated history of mascots.