

## New track fundraiser to start soon



*Photo Credit: Danielle DeFalco*

### **By Kevin Gordon**

LUCKEY — Fundraising for Eastwood High School's track and field teams will have a different look this season.

The Eagles will be seeking donations from the community via email, instead of selling cookie dough and mattresses.

The fundraiser start no later than March 29, Eastwood boys head coach Brian Sabo said. Each athlete on the boys and girls team will provide the coaches with the names and email addresses of 20 persons who are potential

donors to the program.

Sabo then will send one email to each person, detailing in a video what the track and field program is about, how the money is invested back into the athletes and how the person can donate.

The money will be collected through a crowdfunding account, similar to GoFundMe. The track program will receive 80 percent of every donation, Sabo said.

"I've seen other teams in this area do this, and they've had success with it," Sabo said, adding the goal is to raise \$10,000. "We're looking for donations of \$5, \$10, \$15, \$20 and \$25, although some donations may be bigger. We'd also like to get our alumni involved.

"Those smaller donations are huge for us," Sabo added. "Every donation is important to our program."

The email fundraiser replaces the cookie dough sale, but Sabo said the mattress sale may return next year.

"We felt a lot of people would rather, based on what they told us, just give a donation than buy cookie dough," Sabo said. "The pandemic made it hard to do cookie dough and the mattress sale this year, and maybe the cookie dough had run its course."

Brian Sabo and Eastwood girls head coach Nikki Sabo said the money raised would be used to purchase equipment.

"Track is a very expensive sport with different poles, starting blocks," Nikki Sabo said, adding the program needs to replace all of its hurdles. "If we can fundraise to help off-set the cost of some of those items right now, that would be great. We invest the money back into the kids and the equipment."

Nikki Sabo said most of the recent money spent has been on the field events, including new pits and standards, and discs and shot puts. Now, they're looking to use the money on the runners. For this season, Eastwood bought a new Freelap Timing system for practice.

The Freelap system allows for electronic timing of workouts, instead of hand-timed workouts by the coaches. The athletes wear computer chips during practices, and the workouts are timed by pylons on the track. Coaches and athletes then can look at the times on their iPads, tablets and phones. The chips are \$200 each.

“It’s been phenomenal,” Brian Sabo said. “It downloads data from certain distances to our phones, iPads, and we can be more accurate. It’s been a big help.”

The fundraising is even more important this season because the Eastwood Athletic Department has had its income drastically cut by the pandemic. The athletic department’s income comes primarily from ticket and concessions sales, and from coaches, athletes and parents working in the food tent at the Pemberville Free Fair.

“The athletic department right now doesn’t have very much in the way of funds because of the type of year we’ve had,” Nikki Sabo said. “If we can help out, it provides us with some ownership, instead of just being given to us.”

The pandemic canceled Eastwood’s 2020 track season and fundraising.

“No money came in last year, but we didn’t have to spend a lot,” Brian Sabo said. “But we’re really low on funds right now. We think this can be a very good fundraiser because it will branch out into more people without cookie dough changing hands. We’re hoping it runs better. Simple donations add up significantly for us.”



*Photo Credit: Danielle DeFalco*

### **9<sup>th</sup> Lane provides off the track lessons**

Brian Sabo also is unveiling the boys’ program 9<sup>th</sup> Lane.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Lane is the boys program way of doing things the right way outside the track, Brian Sabo said. Since almost all high school tracks have eight lanes, Sabo came up with the 9<sup>th</sup> Lane title for his outside the track teachings.

“The 9<sup>th</sup> Lane is the character stuff, the development, the growth of the human being, including the coaches,” Brian Sabo said. “We’re trying to invest in our kids off the track as well. We’re diving more into building some character development teachings that they’re hopefully getting at home, and we can incorporate those here as well.”

Brian Sabo also has started a mentoring system within the 9<sup>th</sup> Lane where current Eastwood track athletes can be connected with an Eagle track alum in a career they wish to pursue.

“We’ve really tried to be aggressive connecting the kids we have now to our alums,” Brian Sabo said. “The alums can let them know what’s involved, give them some direction. It’s slowly building and coming along.”

And Sabo is hoping the team’s alums and parents stay in touch.

“We want people to support us and follow us, on social media, by coming to the meets, by staying in touch with us,” Brian Sabo said. “We know there are still a lot of alums and parents who still like to follow us and see what we’re doing.”