

# The Register-Herald, Beckley, West Virginia

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## Epling Stadium a hit for Beckley

By Gary Fauber

Register-Herald Assistant Sports Editor

— Charlie Houck summed up Linda K. Epling Stadium with three letters.

“W-O-W on the field,” declared Houck, executive vice president/commercial lending at City National Bank.

For a number of reasons, local business leaders believe West Virginia Miners owners Kay and Doug Epling blasted a home run with the construction of Linda K. Epling Stadium. Several games, from the middle school level all the way up to college, have already been played there, but the main event will take the stage Saturday, June 5, when the West Virginia Miners make their home debut against the Slippery Rock (Pa.) Sliders.

First pitch is slated for 7:05 p.m.

Excitement abounds concerning what the stadium means to the Beckley community.

“As a community, we are privileged to have it,” Houck said. “We all need to support it any way we can.

“We’re going to be able to see the best college baseball players in the land.

“It’s almost like watching all-stars in college football or college basketball.”

“It is a beautiful, first-class facility built mostly with local contractors and local products,” said Richard Jarrell, owner of Chick-fil-A at the Beckley Galleria. “It’s already a boost (to the economy). People have come in to the restaurant after Marshall games or middle school or high school games. People are visiting our restaurants and spending their dollars here.”

Chick-fil-A food will be available at the concession stand for each of the Miners’ 28 home games. Also, July 9 will be Chick-fil-A night. West Virginia hosts the Chillicothe Paints that night.

The event will be held in conjunction with the restaurant’s “Cow Appreciation Day.”

“We will have that all day at Chick-fil-A and then that night at the stadium,” Jarrell said. “We will have games, giveaways and all kinds of stuff to do at the ballpark.”

City National Bank will have a booth set up at 13 home games, including the opener.

“For every new account we open in conjunction with the team, we will make a donation to the ball club,” said Abigail Scott, the bank’s vice president/regional marketing. “We feel like this will be a good partnership.”

Country Inns & Suites is the official host hotel of the West Virginia Miners Baseball Club. Pam Smith, director of sales at the Beckley hotel, said reservations are already being made by out-of-town guests who will be visiting the city when the Miners are at home.

“This is going to be a very good thing,” she said. “It will be another destination for recreation that we can tell our guests about. And the field itself will be hosting concerts and other events.”

Eddie Lilly, manager at Papa John’s, looks forward to the benefits the club can have on area youth.

“The kids will be able to relate to the players because they are still kids themselves,” Lilly said. “Kids will have that role model.”

Lilly hopes the Miners will provide children who would otherwise be unable to afford to see the game a chance to take in baseball and see possible future major league players. Information on tickets can be obtained by calling 304-252-7233.

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**BRIEFLY:** Kyle Blank and Wes Theiss are no longer on the Miners roster. Blank is a pitcher at Marshall and Theiss an infielder at Navarro College in Corsicana, Texas. Gray Stafford, an infielder from Spartanburg (S.C.) Methodist College, has been added ... If nothing else, West Virginia manager Tim Epling can know that he will be fielding a fearless team. Each player filled out profile sheets that asked questions ranging from favorite color to his personal motto. One of the categories was “my bucket list,” and nearly every player listed skydiving as something they want to do ... The team will hold a free public workout at 7:30 p.m. Saturday. The practice should last about an hour and a half, and fans are invited to meet the players and get autographs after it’s over.

— E-mail: [gfauber@register-herald.com](mailto:gfauber@register-herald.com)