

School: Wants 2nd opinion

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The additional testing will include McNaught Field, which was not tested when other Southside athletic fields were tested. The board voted Tuesday night to close all of Southside's sports fields.

At a public meeting last week, officials of the state Cancer Surveillance Program said they had confirmed 22 cases of cancer among current and former Southside students, a number the state said is lower than would be expected. The health department and the conservation department also said that although the soil around the school contains chemical contaminants, those contaminants pose no health threat.

Tony LaSorte, health and safety hygienist for the Schuyler-Chemung-Tioga Board of Cooperative Educational Services, said he is ready to help Sherwood if the district pursues an independent investigation. LaSorte helped state health officials when they conducted their tests of Southside High.

Athletics director John Lesky, working all day Wednesday to find alternative sites for Southside teams

to play, said the district will place signs at McNaught Field warning people to stay off it.

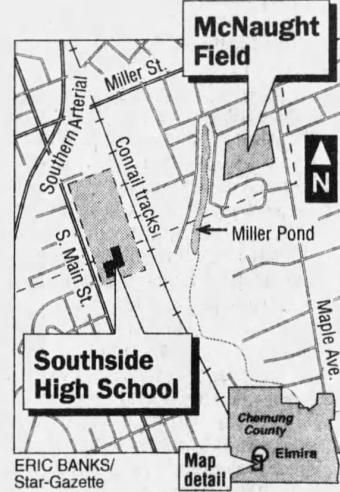
"Obviously we can't send people out to police the field, but our maintenance department is preparing signs to put up saying, 'Please stay off the field,'" Lesky said.

Southside Principal Lisa G. Kelly and head football coach Ron Norman discouraged athletes from granting interviews for this story.

District spokeswoman Kristin Butler said that Kelly wanted to avert a panic among the students and that the coach did not want his players distracted during practice. Norman also did not allow the Star-Gazette to take photographs during practice Wednesday morning.

Greg Zahorian of the 200 block of Fairway Avenue, whose yard borders McNaught Field, said he was surprised that the board had decided to close the field with so little time before fall sports begin. He also said he believes the field that he has lived next to for 15 years is safe.

"What's the difference between the field and my yard?" Zahorian asked Wednesday as he rinsed off



his green John Deere lawn tractor in his driveway. He said his son, Michael, 11, regularly plays with friends in the field, the same way his daughter, Toni, 14, did.

Toni, entering her freshman year at Southside, said she has no reservations about going to Southside.

"I just think it's a coincidence," she said of the people with cancer who have attended or are attending Southside. "One of my friends, her brother had cancer but she's still going to school there."

Clipped By:



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