



FUTBOLITO

A UNIFYING FORCE IN PACOIMA

Alfredo Rosas, 16, likes to play the sport of futbolito because he believes that this mini-version of soccer improves his skills on the pitch. Futbolito is a fast-paced, five-on-five game (also known as “futsal”) that is contested on basketball-sized courts; players use a smaller, heavier version of a regulation soccer ball as well as smaller goals.

“It taught me a lot about controlling the ball,” Alfredo says. “I’m getting quicker

with my movements, and it’s helping me when I play grass soccer.”

But Alfredo also likes to play futbolito because, as he says, “it teaches me to stay out of trouble and it keeps me out of the gangs. There’s a lot of violence in the streets around here. Someone got shot close to here a couple months ago. He was, like, 14-years-old, and he was just hanging out with his friends.”

Alfredo is one of approximately 100 youth who have joined Futbolito Pacoima, an after-school sports league started by the non-profit group Youth Speak Collective in June of 2006 with an LA84 Foundation grant. The program identifies at-risk older youth like Alfredo, ages 13 and up, and, through participation in the league, encourages them to acquire positive character values, skills and knowledge of

Grantmaking

Any day of the week, throughout Southern California, you are likely to find boys and girls participating in an organized sport activity. These activities are provided by a variety of organizations. Some are chapters of larger organizations, others are independent. Many have large yearly budgets, others barely make it through from season to season. There are those that concentrate on only one sport, others that offer three or four. And, there are those that primarily offer sports, and those that use sport as a hook to provide other social services. What they all have in common are dedicated individuals who are willing to wear many hats and who are committed to providing youngsters with the best sport has to offer.

To support the efforts of these organizations, from October 2006 to June 2008, the LA84 Foundation awarded 150 grants totaling \$8,362,085. We are pleased with the diversity of organizations funded, geographically and by sport. You will find a list of the organizations funded on pages 16 to 21.

While we serve the eight counties of Southern California, Los Angeles County remains a priority. Of the 150 grants awarded, approximately 79%, or 118, were to organizations serving youth in Los Angeles County. The remaining 32 grants went to organizations in Imperial, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties. Organizations receiving funding provide a variety of sports opportunities. These include the traditional sports like baseball, soccer or football as well as sports that have not yet gained widespread popularity in Southern California such as lacrosse, table tennis or rugby.

Our partnership with Nike – announced in early 2008 to jointly improve 84 facilities over the next several years – is making it possible for us to have a larger impact in providing more and better places for youth to play sports.

Whether funding improvements or sports equipment and uniforms, our priority remains assisting organizations that offer programming that includes the TLC of sport: Teaching, Learning and Competition.



sports, and good citizenship. The teams practice three times a week during the league's three 14-week seasons; tournaments are held every other weekend.

"We noticed that the kids in the community couldn't access recreation options," says Youth Speak Collective Co-Director Whitney Kasserman from her office in the Pacoima Community Center. "They couldn't afford the fees to join an organized league like AYSO. Even arranging transportation to practice was an issue."

And so, Kasserman decided to bring futbolito to the people. The group located one of the league's three practice sites on the basketball courts in the San Fernando Gardens, the largest low-income housing project in the neighborhood.

Programs like Futbolito Pacoima are desperately needed in the northeast San

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Marcos Canales, a pastor and a former semi-pro player from Uruguay.

"But they're committed to it. They're investing their time that is productive and that forms character in them. It allows them to dream of bigger things than what they see on the streets."

"Kids around here are searching for an identity," says Kasserman. "Unfortunately, that's why some of them become involved with gangs."

the coaches and about how we could change the subs and about how to have less fouls in the games."

He agrees that, "It's hard to live around here because there's a lot of gangs. I see them when I walk to school. But I stay away from those things. This keeps us out of trouble."

One of David's teammates, Juan Paniagua, credits the program for giving him the tools to dream bigger. "Before, I just watched TV and played video games inside the house," he says. "Now, after playing two years, I have a goal: to go to a good college that will help me get a good life."

Ultimately, Kasserman says, Futbolito Pacoima uses sport as a way to prepare kids for the future. "We feel that this program is a gateway to get them on track for other things in life," she says. "The first step was



Fernando Valley area. The dropout rate is high. On local streets, the line between being a teenager and being a gang-banger is dangerously thin; Pacoima is so plagued by gang violence that, after a recent spate of homicides, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa targeted the area for a gang-reduction program.

At Hubert Humphrey Park, another of the league's practice sites, the players sometimes share the space with the "Humphrey Boys" gang. "The risk of violence and shooting is constantly around these kids, so it's always kind of a victory just to see them show up for practice," says coach

According to Kasserman, Futbolito Pacoima is succeeding despite the gang activity because the players themselves have a voice in the league. Team members have formed a leadership council that meets regularly and has authority to draw up rules and schedule tournaments. "They get to make adult decisions, and that gives them a sense of responsibility," she says. "Because they have to show leadership, they have ownership of the program."

David Rosillo is a 16-year-old defender who plays on the San Fernando Gardens team. He says that he likes the program because "we decide what we want. We work things out together – about the referees and

soccer: we would never have gotten through to them without the soccer."

Kasserman believes that Futbolito Pacoima will continue to grow. Her wish-list includes funding to hire additional coaches (currently there are four) so as to improve the quality of play. "We'd like to see the league get more competitive, with more skilled players and more capable coaches," she says. "Now that we know that the program works, we'd like to expand it so we can involve more kids and help them achieve their goals in life."





LA84
Foundation

Letter from
the Chairman

Dear Friends,

I assumed the position of Chair of the LA84 Foundation on June 6, 2007. It was my honor to follow in the steps of Peter V. Ueberroth. It was through Peter's vision and skillful management skills that this institution was created. The success of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games under his guidance resulted in a surplus from which this Foundation received its endowment. As Chair of this Foundation since 2002, he kept us focused on our mission of advancing youth sports in Southern California. The board, management and the millions of youngsters who have benefited from our work owe him a great deal of gratitude. I am grateful that he remains on the board and continues to contribute to our work.



Every organization must evolve with the changing times. I am pleased that the LA84 Foundation is constantly seeking innovative and creative ways to provide youngsters with the opportunity to experience the magic of sports. Our partnership with the Los Angeles Unified School District Beyond the Bell Branch is one such example. Through this partnership, thousands of middle school youngsters now have the opportunity of participating in structured after-school sports programs at the school they attend.

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This activity keeps them connected to the school and to the teachers/coaches with whom they are already familiar. This connectedness is important in reducing the drop-out rate. Studies show that

youngsters who do not perform well or feel alienated at the middle school level are more likely to drop out of high school.

The Foundation's partnership with Nike to create/improve 84 sports facilities

in Los Angeles is natural and exciting. It is natural in that the LA84 Foundation and Nike share the same philosophy about the power of sport to shape young lives physically and emotionally. It is exciting in that by combining forces we are each leveraging each other's resources for the greater benefit of the Los Angeles community. We plan to pursue other partnerships with other corporations or individuals with which similar results can be obtained.

In 2009, it will be the 25th anniversary of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. There is much to celebrate about the impact of those games on the Los Angeles community, and in fact, on the entire Olympic Movement. We at the LA84 Foundation are extremely proud of the work we have done to date as the legacy of those Games. We are committed to live up to the high standards of excellence set by the Olympians, volunteers and staff who worked on those Games. Most importantly we are committed to providing youngsters in Southern California with the opportunity to be "Life Ready Through Sport."

THOMAS E. LARKIN, JR.
Chairman

