



# YOUTHFIRST

Volume 1, Series 8

7th and 8th Girls

## Youth Sports and Recreation Programs the Key to Leadership of Tomorrow

Youth sports and recreation programs are one of the primary approaches through which communities can increase physical activity and fitness among young people. Youth sports refers to organized athletic programs that provides a systematic sequence of practices and contests for children and adolescents. These organizations such as Amateur Athletic Union, Little League Baseball, United States Tennis Association, and United States Youth Soccer Association along with community Centers like the YMCA or YWCA and local recreation

departments. Youth sports experiences differ greatly in competitive level, length of season, cost to competitors, qualifications of coaches and officials, and skill levels of athletes. Community centers and recreation departments also offer recreation programs that are not competitive, such as instruction in swimming or martial arts. Or group activities like aerobic workouts. Access to fitness equipment like weight lifting and stationary bicycles and "open gym" where people may run on a track or shoot baskets. Communities should support

and coordinate youth sports and recreation programs so that they provide a variety of sport and recreational activities that meet the needs of all young people, regardless of age, sex, race/ethnicity or ability. Programs that only offer a limited number of team sports and do not also provide noncompetitive, lifetime fitness and recreational activities such as running, bicycling, dancing or swimming do not adequately the many young people who are less skilled, less physically fit, or not

**SEE LEADERSHIP PG 2**

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**Coaches Learning about Youth Sports The Sports Education and Leadership Program at UNLV**

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### For more information:

- ☺ Check out [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- ☺ Point your mouse to: [www.leagueoffans.org](http://www.leagueoffans.org)
- ☺ Click on [www.midweeknews.com](http://www.midweeknews.com)
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## Programs for Youth Sports

Here are a list of searchable websites promoting leadership skills.

- American Association of AdaptedSports Programs (AAASP)
- Project TEAMWORK
- Character Counts! Sports
- Positive Coaching Alliance
- Start Smart Sports Development Program
- Academy For Youth
- Sports Administrators (AYSA)
- The National Consortium for Physical Education and Recreation for Individuals with Disabilities (NCPERID)

For all the updated news click on [www.YouthFirst.info](http://www.YouthFirst.info)

## Leadership Continued...

attracted to team sports. Communities also must develop and offer adapted sports and recreation programs that meet the needs of young people with disabilities.

Help to provide access to community sports and recreation programs for all young people. Although sports and recreation programs for young people exist in most communities, it is extremely difficult to start and even more difficult to sustain these programs in certain communities, such as public housing and inner-city neighborhoods, Native American lands, and rural areas. The nation should ensure that all young people, irrespective of their family's income or the community in which they live, have access to youth sports and recreation programs and the equipment and supplies needed to participate in such programs.

Many young people are not able to participate in youth sports and recreation programs because they have no means, or no safe means, of getting to the programs from home or school and getting home afterwards. Sports and recreation program directors cite the transportation problem as one of the most critical barriers to youth participation in their programs. Transportation difficulties affect a wide variety of young people, including those who live in low-income, urban communities and those who live in rural areas, as well as those who are part of single-parent families and those who have two parents who work. This barrier should be overcome to make sports and recreation programs accessible for all our young people.

Community recreation programs have attempted to address the transportation

problem in a number of ways, including:

- Having the public bus system take children to local swimming pools at no charge.
- Purchasing busses to transport children to and from program activities.
- Mobile recreation units; taking vans with physical activity equipment into neighborhoods that do not have access to physical activity facilities.
- Establishing sports leagues near public housing communities to eliminate the need for transportation.

Another strategy is enable youth sports and recreation programs to provide coaches and recreation program staff with the training they need to offer developmentally appropriate, safe, and enjoyable physical activity experiences for young people.

The quality of any youth sports and recreation experience depends on the competence and supportiveness of its adult program leaders, particularly the coaches. Approximately 2.5 million adults generously volunteer their time each year as coaches of youth sports teams. The commitment of these individuals provides a vital source of support for our young people. However, many coaches have no formal education in coaching techniques, first aid, injury prevention, or emergency care. A variety of excellent sport-specific training programs and standards for coaches, as well as National Standards for Athletic Coaches, are available.

Training for coaches should emphasize teaching young people not only about sports skills and lifetime physical activity, but also about responsibility,

leadership, nonviolent conflict resolution, sportsmanship, integrity, and cooperation. It is important that all youth coaches be offered and encouraged to take formal educational courses offered by local recreation departments or sport-specific organizations. Better trained coaches will enhance the enjoyment of the team sports experience for young people, increase retention rates among participants, and help to reduce sports-related injuries.



# Life Lessons Can Be Learned from Youth Sports

Although the majority of athletes will never have an opportunity to play at the professional level, there are a lot of characteristics and growth potentials young athletes will learn by being involved in sports that can benefit them later in life.

Remember that first time you struck out in Little League? How bats, gloves, and equipment went flying through the air. What about when you were a kid and you didn't like something one of the other kids did while playing ball in the back yard, and you threw down the equipment, and said "I'm not playing with you anymore" and went inside? Remember the first time one of your teammates got down on you because you made an error or missed a shot? Or that first time your coach's face turned red and he/she got on you for throwing the ball to the wrong base or not executing the play? And what about that time when your team lost a game because you dropped a pass or you made an error and the game-winning run crossed home plate?

At first, the emotions kids have to go through are a lot to deal with as a young athlete. As they grow older, they begin to learn how to deal with emotion, they learn about what being a TEAM is all about. Learning to deal with the emotional side of sports can help a young athlete understand that as they get older mistakes and errors are a part of life. They will learn to deal with the mistakes a little different as each mistake or error happens. It will help them to learn how to keep their head up and stay positive knowing they will have another opportunity the next time. Typically a child will express anger and disappointment after losing a game, in most cases they will blame something or someone else and never take the blame themselves, and that's okay. One of the hardest things that a child has to learn is the emphasis of TEAM (let's face it, it's hard for some adults still).

When playing sports children don't understand that you win and you lose as a team, but as a child grows older, they will begin to understand that when there's a team mate down whether it's at home or on the field or in the workplace, they will know how to recognize that and will know how to step up and take on the extra role to ensure the success of that team.

A child will come to the understanding that there is no "I" in TEAM. A young athlete will learn how to look at the whole picture and not just as an individual as well as learning how to give support to someone instead of blame. Maybe NBA Center Kareem-Abdul-Jabbar said it the best when he said, "One man can be a crucial ingredient on a team, but one man cannot make a team".

Another thing a child will learn by playing sports is respect. They learn that talking back to a coach or an umpire or a referee doesn't fair out to well in the long run. However, they will gain respect for their elders and learn to understand that they need to listen. A child will also learn confidence. For a child to be confident in themselves and to be confident in their abilities help's them to take on an unfamiliar situation but know they have the ability to take it on and be able to walk away when it's over with their head held high knowing they gave the best effort they could.

It teaches them to stay positive and they learn to praise themselves for a job well done, and are able to look back and reflect on what they've accomplished in their young lives.

Leadership can often come from confidence. It's a skill that kids will develop by being appointed to a leadership role on a team, such as a team captain. Some kids will find themselves in this role sooner than others, but that's OK, at one point in time all athletes will have to step up and take on a leadership role with their team(s).

In an article written by Dr. Arnold LeUnes, a professor of sports psychology at Texas A & M. He had made a statement in the article regarding kids and youth sports; "I do believe that lessons learned on the athletic field generalize to every day life".

He went on to discuss the trials and the pains young athlete's go through with themselves and with their parents.

Kids who have the opportunity to participate in sports at a young age will develop the skills and knowledge to endure tasks handed to them as they go through life.

As adults, we can often look back at our youth sports days and reflect on some of the situations and learning opportunities we had and how by going through those experiences, it has helped us to take a different approach to certain situations.

Our kids will have to endure and experience those situations themselves but by having that opportunity they will also learn what we've learned and will grow up with the abilities to get through them.

