

THROUGH SOCCER, COMMUNITY PARTNERS WORK TOGETHER TO DRIVE HEALTHIER OUTCOMES

December 2019



Jameer had trouble staying still. He would recklessly run around the yards, bumping into other children and wrenching away from teachers trying to chase him down.

As a third-grader at Budlong Avenue Elementary in South Los Angeles, a little aggression on the schoolyard isn't necessarily a sign of distress. However, Leo Hill III, the Program Director of Brotherhood Crusade's Youth Development Soccer Program, noticed a behavior more chaotic than usual.

"We had no idea why," he said. "I had him join our soccer program because I saw the teachers were struggling with how to engage him. Initially he was against it, so I just had him do one-on-one with me, and we were just kicking the ball around. I asked him what was wrong. What happened?"

"He had just lost his brother."

While supported by his family, the trauma of losing a sibling was still a lot to handle at such a young age. To help him cope and to give him another supportive adult in his life, Hill connected Jameer with Jason Moseley, a Brotherhood Crusade coach-mentor at Budlong Elementary.

"Jameer's new positive attitude was just infectious," Moseley said, "and I just liked his motivation and wanting to get better. I build bonds with everybody, but he and I became special, and his mom, too."

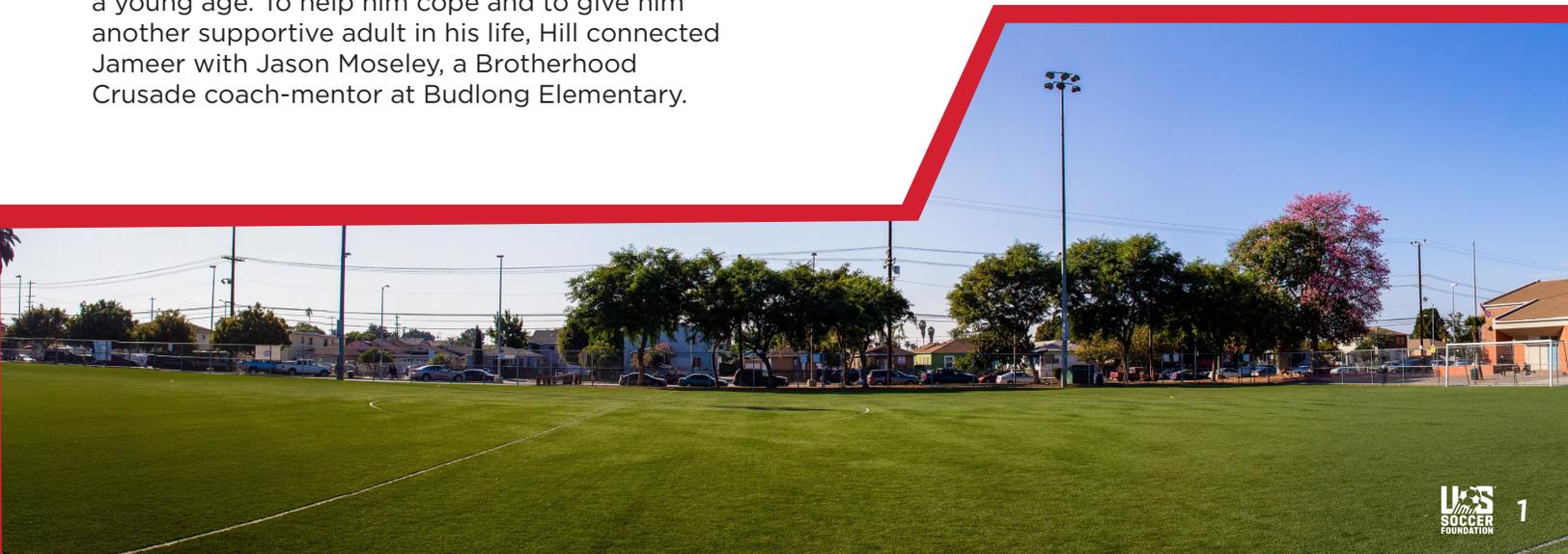
Moseley stepped in to help the entire family out, including Jameer's single mother.

"Sometimes, mom couldn't take him to games," he continued. "So I would pick him up and take him because I know it was hard on her, and I just wanted to be there for him. I know how much he loved the game, and I could see how he was changing his life in a positive way."

Hill says that Jameer is now thriving in the seventh grade, saying that even some scouts are looking at him for his skill on the pitch.

WHO HELPS MAKE THESE STORIES POSSIBLE?

This is just one story about the power of the U.S. Soccer Foundation's *Soccer for Success* program. In South Los Angeles, the Foundation — as well as the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) — has worked with Hill's Brotherhood





Crusade to use the program as an intervention to improve the lives of children living in underserved communities.

Soccer for Success is an after-school program offered free to participants and their families. In addition to teaching soccer fundamentals, the program helps children establish healthy habits. To effectively run the program, local teens and adults are trained to coach and mentor children and engage with their families.

For Brotherhood Crusade and other program operators in California, the program incorporates components from SNAP-Ed — or Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program Education — which is dedicated to helping eligible participants make nutritious food decisions within a limited budget and lead physically active lifestyles consistent with the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs).

The partnership in California is simple. Understanding the appeal of the Soccer for Success curriculum, CDPH works with the U.S. Soccer Foundation to update nutritional components of the curriculum to meet SNAP-Ed standards. The Foundation then provides the curriculum and training to local organizations — like Brotherhood Crusade — to run the program

with their staff who are well integrated in the community.

CDPH continues to work with local health departments and implementing organizations to help provide nutrition-focused educational programs, like Soccer for Success, to those populations that lack access to affordable, nutritious foods and health programs. These populations are eligible to engage with SNAP-Ed-reimbursable programs.

BUILDING THE PARTNERSHIP FROM THE GROUND UP

In 2014, the Foundation teamed up with Brotherhood Crusade, the LA Galaxy, and other partners to create the field at Algin Sutton Recreation Center in Manchester Square.

“This used to be nothing but dirt,” Hill said of a now showing shimmering, green turf with an electronic scoreboard. “It was gang-infested. No one would come. It was a horrible, horrible park because of all the gang violence and drug use.”

He went on to note that kids would avoid the area both during the day and at night. But the creation



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of the new space, combined with offering programs like *Soccer for Success* and other sports programs, has inspired change. This is evident to anyone who visits the center. Just a few minutes after arriving at the space, a young girl runs up to Hill to give him a hug.

She is just one of the 70,000 children engaged in *Soccer for Success* nationwide and over six thousand in the Los Angeles area. In the 2017-2018 program year, the Foundation trained more than 3,300 coach-mentors to run *Soccer for Success* in more than 425 communities across the country.

With a proper playing field and environment for children to learn, the next part of the partnership required ground troops to implement the curriculum. The men and women of Brotherhood Crusade underwent comprehensive training to best address the needs of local youth.

COACH-MENTORS: THE FOUNDATION OF THE FOUNDATION

Coach-mentors, as the name suggests, have two roles in *Soccer for Success*. The coach side relays skills specific to the sport of soccer to the children involved. This involves creating a practice schedule, ensuring scrimmages and games are run properly, and that program participants know how to dribble a ball, save a goal, and more.

The mentor side is arguably the more important role, as it allows adults and older teens to guide children. This could be teaching children skills like teamwork and perseverance, providing emotional support through a trying time, or engaging with families to help them implement the nutritional lessons learned at practice.

Jason Moseley of Brotherhood Crusade, Jameer's coach-mentor, is just one of dozens of people leading *Soccer for Success* in Los Angeles. He's also a certified *Soccer for Success* Trainer and prepares dozens of potential coach-mentors to run the program before the start of the season.

Before Moseley starts teaching to-be coach-mentors the curriculum, he puts the importance of everyone's role into context.

"Sixteen million youth will reach the age of 19 without ever having a mentor," he states. "81 percent of children living in households earning less than \$25,000 are not playing sports, and one in three children are overweight or obese."

Most importantly, he continues by saying that two-thirds of all young adults have experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE), which is categorized by abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction.

The South Los Angeles area is not immune to these issues. According to the Los Angeles Times, there were

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*based on post-season surveys done on thousands of program participants

140 violent crimes in Manchester Square, an area Brotherhood Crusade serves, between August and September 2019. There have been at least 250 homicides per year in the city since 2013.

In addition, a quarter of the families in Manchester Square are run by a single parent according to the Los Angeles Times.

While the stats can seem overwhelming — and hard to tackle — Moseley and Hill are quick to emphasize how Soccer for Success in Los Angeles can help combat these problems.

He rattles off numbers that show the impact of the program:

- **86 percent of participants stay away from anti-social behaviors**
- **83 percent have a lower body mass index than before starting the program**
- **81 percent feel better about their futures**

These numbers are based on post-season surveys done on thousands of program participants. And the faces — and stories behind these numbers — are not just limited to players like Jameer. Many of the coach-mentors are women and men from these communities who are familiar with the challenges facing underserved communities. The

program — and training they receive — also helps coach-mentors reorient their lives.

One young man bounces into the gymnasium for the training, fist-bumping Hill on his way with a boundless excitement for the day.

“He dropped out of high school,” Hill said. “So what Brotherhood did was give him a diploma, helping him get his GED. We tracked his academic progress as he volunteered with us. Now, he’s a full-time coach for the season.”

Stories such as these go on and on. One reason for the viability of the Los Angeles program is that Hill is able to earth the community’s resources to best help the youth participants.

Ximena Perez is a program coordinator with a degree in child psychology from Cal State Dominguez Hills. This background helps parents trust Brotherhood Crusade and the Soccer for Success program as a place for their children, she says.

“We work with parents sometimes as much as children,” she said. “We work for the child so that we all know they’re going to be safe with us the whole time.”

With people such as Perez as a backbone for child development in the program, the other coach-mentors can work on logistical support for the parents. This involves helping provide basic equipment to organizing transportation to and from practice.

For Brotherhood Crusade, the Soccer for Success program does much more than teach participants how to dribble a soccer ball and score a goal. From an emotional and mental health perspective, it has comprehensively addressed the needs of hundreds of children in the Manchester Square area.



INTEGRATION & EXPANSION OF NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION

To improve participants' physical health, funding and educational support from CDPH was critical. The department's health educator, Jackie Siukola Tompkins, states that an initial grant was offered to the U.S. Soccer Foundation to fill a gap in nutritional education in South Los Angeles.

"Early conversations with the Foundation identified a promising intervention to promote physical activity with youth with community support," she said. "As part of this program guidance, we are charged with nutritional education."

Together with CDPH, the U.S. Soccer Foundation developed a SNAP-Ed-approved *Soccer for Success* curriculum. It emphasizes, among many things, an overhaul in the available foods in school cafeterias and helps SNAP-Ed participants identify nutritious options in local, community grocery stores. This includes encouraging intake moderation for any products that contain saturated fat, added sugars and sugar substitutes, hydrogenated oils, high fructose corn syrup, and anything that contains artificial flavors or coloring. Instead, SNAP-Ed participants are encouraged to identify the healthiest option possible like salads, products containing natural sugars, fruits, vegetables, and strategies for identifying the most nutritious option, even in "grab-and-go" situations.

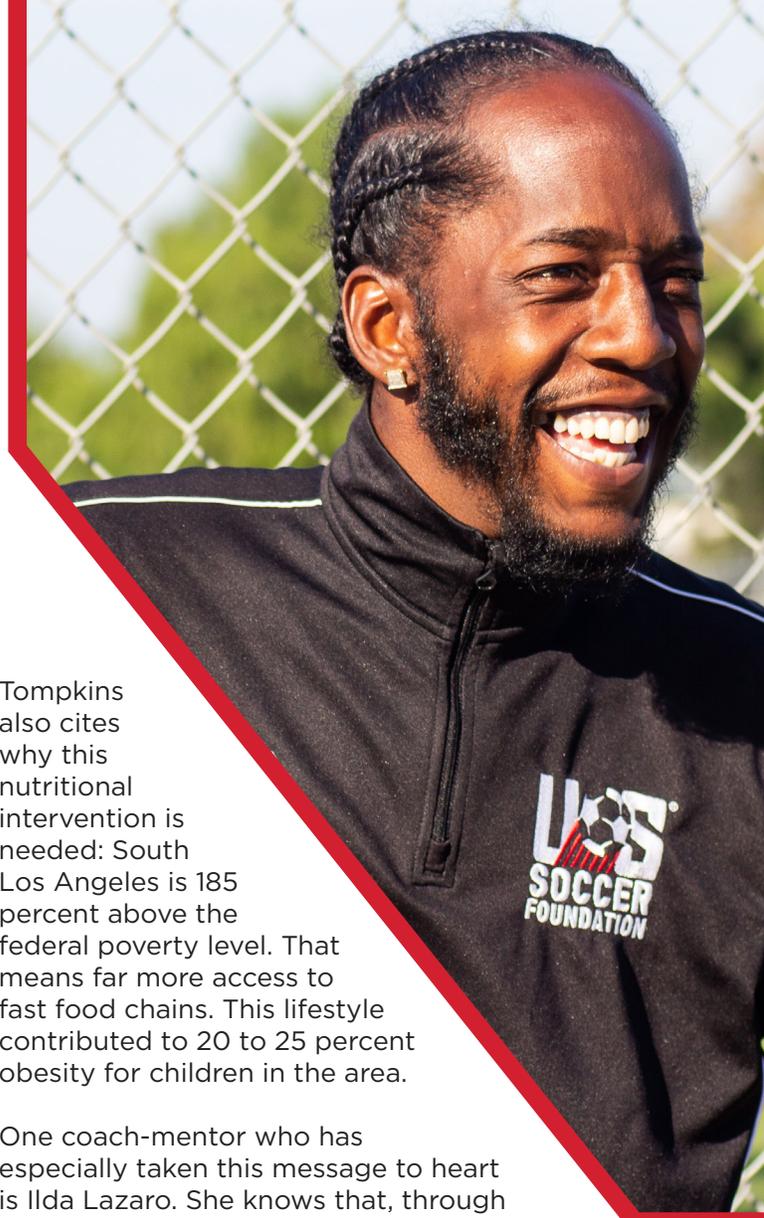
Tompkins also cites why this nutritional intervention is needed: South Los Angeles is 185 percent above the federal poverty level. That means far more access to fast food chains. This lifestyle contributed to 20 to 25 percent obesity for children in the area.

One coach-mentor who has especially taken this message to heart is Ilda Lazaro. She knows that, through Brotherhood Crusade and the *Soccer for Success* program, she can provide good food for free to the youth in her corner of South Los Angeles.

"Parents just give their kids the money they have to buy junk," she said. "It really hurts. I'm really passionate about it...I'll give kids bananas. I'll give kids mangos. I'll talk to parents about how they can feed their kids the right way to be ready for practice."

Like Perez, Lazaro focuses much of her energy on the parents as well. She runs CrossFit workouts with the parents to keep them active, which she says helps set an example for their children. She even creates dietary plans for families, including proper servings of vegetables.

Hill confirms that the children in his program have seen about an 80 percent decrease in Body Mass Index (BMI), an indicator of weight that may lead to health problems, which is right in line with the *Soccer for Success* average. With all of the



WEEK 11: DAY 2

SOCCER TEACHING POINTS: GOALKEEPING: READY STANCE AND GRIPS

- Ready Stance - feet shoulder width apart, on balls of feet, knees bent, arms up, and palms facing forward with fingertips up and eyes forward
- Diamond Grip - catch with fingertips not the palms, bend elbows upon catching ball, fingers spread wide to cover as much surface as possible: thumbs and index fingers almost touching
- "W" Grip - catch with fingertips not the palms, bend elbows upon catching ball, fingers spread wide to cover as much surface as possible; thumbs together, fingers pointing almost straight up

NUTRITION TEACHING POINTS: SOURCES OF SUGAR

- Eating and drinking too many less healthy foods and beverages with added sugars makes it difficult to achieve a healthy eating pattern without consuming too many calories
- Encourage players to swap less healthy cereals with added sugars for unsweetened cereals. Add fruits for some sweetness
- Reinforce that if players want to consume less healthy beverages with added sugars, that they should opt for the smallest size possible

ACTIVITY 1 (15 MIN.): NO ADDED SUGARS ALLOWED

Set-Up: 4 large cones - 20 x 20 yd. grid, 2 disc cones: create 1 goal with cones 6 yds. apart in center of grid, groups of 6 per grid (1 goalkeeper, 3 attackers, 2 defenders), 3 pinnies per grid (for attackers), several soccer balls per grid

- Designate a starting goalkeeper (natural sugar) to defend the goal, keeper starts laying down on goal line
- 3 attackers (added sugars) play against the 2 defenders (natural sugars) inside the grid (3v2)
- Goalkeeper and 2 defenders (natural sugars) must prevent the 3 attackers (added sugars) from scoring
- The attackers may score on either side of goal in center of grid
- The goalkeeper defends both sides of the goal
- Rotate players quickly so all players are natural and added sugars



PROGRESSION SUGGESTIONS

- Defenders may score by dribbling and stopping the soccer ball on any end line
- Move a defender to the attacking team (4v1) if there is a lack of scoring opportunities
- Play timed rounds or to number of goals scored or saves made

COACHING POINTS

- Soccer: Emphasize goalkeeper moving along the goal line to defend the goal and attackers shooting ball toward corners with the laces part of the foot
- Nutrition: Discuss the importance of replacing added sugars

SCHEDULE

- 1.) STAFF SET-UP (15 MIN.)
- 2.) WARM-UP & OPENING CIRCLE (10 MIN.)
- 3.) ACTIVITY 1 (15 MIN.)
- 4.) ACTIVITY 2 (15 MIN.)
- 5.) SCRIMMAGES (10-25 MIN.)
- 6.) COOL DOWN (5 MIN.)
- 7.) CLOSING CIRCLE & CHEER (5 MIN.)
- 8.) STAFF DEBRIEF (15 MIN.)

Sample Curriculum

economic disadvantages of Manchester Square, this shows a special commitment from people such as Lazaro to take the SNAP-Ed curriculum seriously.

SNAP-ED REIMBURSEMENTS & PLANS FOR EXPANSION

Initially, the Soccer for Success programs in California were not SNAP-Ed-approved, so the Foundation worked with subject-matter experts at CDPH to make sure that the curriculum was in line with the latest SNAP-Ed standards so that all of the nutrition content in the program conforms with the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

In California, this qualified select Soccer for Success programs for reimbursement, easing the financial burden inherent to running the program and any concerns about sustainable sources of funding. Because the state's local health departments are responsible for reimbursing the programs that become eligible for SNAP-Ed, partners receive funding to run the program.

SNAP-Ed programs can vary from state to state. With slight modifications for Florida, the program will be implemented across the state through partnerships with SNAP-Ed and Florida 4-H.

Soccer for Success and SNAP-Ed is a two-way relationship. Kaley Mialki, a registered dietician with the University of Florida IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program (Florida's SNAP-Ed program), helped coordinate a training with the U.S. Soccer Foundation that brought 90 staff

members to Central Florida for a coach-mentor training in December 2019. She estimates that the newly-trained team will be looking to expand Soccer for Success in the state by the summer of 2020 or earlier.

The Soccer for Success coach-mentor training for staff in the UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program





looking for the next location for the program, what kind of people will make the engine run?

You need people like Hill to inspire the community. You need people like Moseley to connect with children on a personal level. You need Perez's child development bonafides. Lastly, you need people like Lazaro willing to take the training to heart.

As special as these individuals are, every city has good leaders, personable people, mental health experts, and committed adults. Every city has qualified people to ensure that an investment in Soccer for Success has a substantial return.

As long as you have an organization like Brotherhood Crusade, you can find caring adults who will help put youth on a trajectory for success.

She notes that Soccer for Success is an excellent avenue for SNAP-Ed in Florida to add physical activity to its approved curriculum offerings for kindergarten through 8th grade participants. As the UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program provides nutrition education in 40 counties, these nutrition educators will help expand the reach of Soccer for Success across the state.

Outside of California and Florida, the Soccer for Success curriculum has been added to the national SNAP-Ed Toolkit. This means that SNAP-Ed participants have the ability to select Soccer for Success when looking for an evidence-based program that encourages good nutrition and physical activity.

DEVOTED PEOPLE: THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE PROGRAM

Leo Hill. Jason Moseley. Ximena Perez. Ilda Lazaro.

The objectively positive results of the Soccer for Success program in South Los Angeles have a lot of partners and organizations to thank. The Foundation provides the funding and training, CDPH provided the educational background for nutrition to be integrated into the curriculum, and other sponsors fill financial and operational gaps.

This is consistent across communities nationwide. However, for the program to really be successful, think of Hill, Moseley, Perez, and Lazaro. When





As the national leader in sports-based youth development, the U.S. Soccer Foundation is committed to helping young people embrace active and healthy lifestyles, using soccer to cultivate critical life skills that pave the path to a better future.

The Foundation is working to make soccer everyone's game by pledging to engage one million children in *Soccer for Success* and create 1,000 mini-pitches by 2026.



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