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Kids and Local Law Enforcement “Kick It” Together

Rallying players from the sidelines, the watchful mom allows that it is not always easy to get her two sons out of bed for school. “But on Saturdays,” her eyes twinkling and her grin widening, “they are up and ready to go play soccer at 7am!” - no small feat since the gym doesn’t open until 10am.

This mother’s two sons are involved in **Conexión de Fútbol**, a winter indoor soccer outreach program for kids who could use some additional role modeling, accountability and fun. It meets on Saturdays at Truckee Elementary School and at the Boys and Girls Club in Kings Beach.

Conexión de Fútbol is designed especially for kids struggling academically in school, those who have already engaged the justice system, and kids in need of positive adult role models - kids considered “at-risk” and who are in grades 3-8. Participants are asked to complete a program contract that holds them accountable for their actions in school and in the community.

Not just beneficial for the young folks involved, Conexión de Fútbol is good for the entire community. The goals of the program include:

- Providing a healthy and safe environment for learning and enjoyment of soccer.
- Fostering positive relationships between youths and law enforcement officers.
- Reducing the amount and severity of juvenile crime in North Tahoe area.
- Breaking down barriers between the different ethnic and cultural groups.

Soccer is a powerful motivational tool to help vulnerable kids develop the confidence to make better decisions within their school environment and the community. Conexión de Fútbol can help kids learn from each other and the supervising adults how to more positively engage their world.

A pre and post program survey will be conducted for all participants (adults and kids) to assess the impact of the program on their attitudes toward one another, school behavior patterns, academic progress and community engagement. The aim of Conexión de Fútbol is to build positive, life-changing relationships between young persons of diverse backgrounds and cultures and local law enforcement and rescue communities.

Amy Machin-Ward, a former NCAA All-American, U.S. National Team Member and Collegiate Coach, is the founding Director of Conexión de Fútbol, the community outreach program of Sierra Mountain Soccer Club, a local non-profit competitive and developmental youth soccer organization where Machin-Ward serves as Director of Coaching.

Conexión de Fútbol is sponsored by Sierra Mountain Soccer Club, Boys and Girls Club of North Lake Tahoe, and The Tahoe Truckee Community Foundation. Due to the popularity of the program, partners to the project are seeking additional funding to extend the program beyond March.

For more information, contact Program Director, Amy Machin-Ward at 530-386-6047.