



Sports Stars; Soccer, School of Life

is a prevention program promoted by the Government of Mexico that provides an opportunity for young people to develop, reassess and define their life projects with a look towards their future without violence through soccer. After serving 1,500 youth in 21 Academies in 2013 as a pilot program, this year the program has grown and is reaching more young people across the country.

Program Objectives:

- Open soccer academies with training spaces to promote the physical, emotional and relational development of youth from the ages of 13 to 16 years old who live within the priority districts of Mexico as identified by the National Program for Social Prevention of Violence and Crime of the Ministry of Interior.
- Support at-risk youth in their personal development and helping them to define their life projects through:



- Motivation and personal attention
- Contact with professional Mexican soccer figures
- Testimonies from successful role models

“A soccer player is an inspirational role model, someone who represents how you want to be, and motivates you to be and achieve more. If the player grew up in similar high-risk situations to the youth participants including violent environments or economic hardship and overcame those challenges, the young person is even more inspired by them knowing that he or she can overcome their own personal challenges as well.” – FEV Operating Manual

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Program Activity Highlights August – September 2014:

- We are already starting Academies and there will soon be 55 throughout the entire country. The academy in Chilpancingo, for example, opened their doors on August 4th welcoming new youth participants. Government representatives attended the event including the Undersecretary of Prevention and Citizen Participation of SEGOB, Roberto Campa Cifrián, the Governor of Guerrero Ángel Aguirre Rivero and the Municipal President Mario Moreno Arcos. In addition, ex soccer players Ángel "Rambo" Sosa, Antonio Torres Servín and Cristian Torres Hidalgo participated in the event.



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- A fundamental part of the Academies is the coexistence of family and friends to generate community. Our youth participants scored points for youth development and community participation on August 30th in Solidaridad by organizing a soccer game with 63 young people, 13 family members, and 26 community members!
- On September 6th, fathers and mothers in Cuautla took part in a workshop, *Who are the adolescents of today?* A total of 31 parents attended and expressed their joy in seeing the benefits that the program is having on their children both in terms of developing their values and physical health. Parents were invited to motivate their sons and daughters by forming clubs to support their children during meetings or soccer tournaments.
- With support of the Mexican Football Federation an important part of this project is linking our youth participants with professional teams. On September 12th and 13th, 22 Youth participants learned some tricks of the game from the professionals in Zacatecas by attending the Division 1A and Division 3 professional soccer games.

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- Our youth participants built stronger relationships with their parents and families in Acapulco at our Soccer Rally on the Beach event on September 13th. Well-done ACCIONA A.C.! Together families and youth participants practiced their balancing skills, ball control, stamina, speed, and concentration. Operation Blessing donated four balls to the lucky winners including three youth participants and one mother.

Program Achievements to Date:

- 144 days of sports training
- 40 former professional soccer players
- 288 hours of personal development, leadership, and life project modules
- 40 Academies working across 15 different states throughout Mexico
- 80 expert educators working with youth participants
- 17 participating civil society organizations
- Involvement of municipal, state and federal government

- Scholarships and networking/insertion for young people
- 3,727 youth contacted of which **2,467 have signed up so far**: 418 female participants and 1,662 male participants.
- 346 male and 137 female participants that we are serving are not enrolled in school.
- 780 male and 234 female participants that we are serving are at risk of dropping out of school



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*"By developing life skills, [young] people are more likely to live a healthy and joyful life, to have control over possible determinants to their health and welfare, and to participate in the construction of more just, united and equitable society."
- FEV Operating Manual*

Program Results Beyond Numbers:

- Thank you to our youth in Iguala for your inquisitive questions, dialogue, and participation in workshops. These youth participants have developed cleanup activities for the space where their workshops are given, serving and reclaiming the space and showing awareness and care for their educational environment. For the prevention of violence we need to care for and restore our public spaces.
- Youth participants in Cuautla showed their creative talents by proposing to create a rap song about the program. We look forward to hearing more from this group who has made dramatic progress in terms of discipline for their punctuality, honesty, and respect for their peers.
- Congratulations to participants Irwin, Rafael and Carlos of Acapulco who have resumed their studies at the middle-school level and were accepted to INEA and Colegio de Bachilleres Plantel 16!
- We delivered the first batch of uniforms to Guerrero! They are incredible! Soon every young person will have his or her uniform and new shoes to play soccer.
- Congratulations Kristoffer and Lizbeth in Acapulco who overcame their concerns about continuing their education and were successfully accepted to INEA!

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- Participants from our 2013 programs in Cuernavaca are now leaders for the new generation of participants helping to facilitate and develop their leadership skills. We are also very proud of our coach in Cuernavaca, Gerardo Galindo, who overcame a difficult disease like a champion.
- Mothers in Zacatecas have commented that the program is helping youth to turn away from using or the temptation of using drugs and that overall they have seen a reduction in violence in their communities. Youth participants who have enrolled in the Academy have invited other colleagues and friends who are suffering from substance abuse to join the program.
- Congratulations to José Bryan in Acapulco who expressed his desire to stop drug-use and was successfully placed in CESUP!



Our greatest achievement will always be putting young people and their needs at the center of our programs and witnessing as they make positive changes in their life towards a promising future.

