

Soccer Transforms Lives!

ELITE SOCCER YOUTH DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY (ESYDA)

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On multiple days each week, delightful sounds of children having fun can be heard spilling from the athletic field at Jackson Road Elementary School in Silver Spring, Maryland. Sounds of excitement, joy, and enthusiasm ring out as boys and girls ranging in age and skill level from around the community gather. Unified by the beautiful game of soccer, everyone is welcome, and no child is ever turned away.

The Elite Soccer Youth Development Academy (ESYDA), led by Coach Agbegnigan Amouzou (Coach FoFo), makes this possible for 100 or more children each evening. Coach FoFo, a former European Professional soccer player of 15 years, has been graciously giving of his time in this way for nearly 20 years. Despite many challenges, he remains steadfastly committed to the children! His unwavering leadership continues to be a light on the hill for the community.

Today, along with the help of a team of dedicated coaches, including former professional players, and older players who serve as coaches in addition to many other volunteers, ESYDA is building bridges and constructing stronger communities as believers in the trilogy of children, "Kids-Sports-Peace."



In addition to recreational and travel soccer programs, ESYDA also offers opportunities for athletes with orthopedic impairments and learning differences to participate through their TOPSoccer program, beginning with ESYDA Dribblers, co-founded by Rachel Watanabe Tate, Director of the Special Education Department at the Barrie School in Silver Spring.

Soccer is a great way for children to have fun while staying fit and making friendships. But soccer also provides for so much more! Lulu and Charlie are great examples of the power of soccer. When Charlie first started attending, he was quiet and reserved, had difficulty communicating, and had behavioral issues that were difficult to manage due to his disability. Now, he is flourishing as an active, talkative, and engaged player who is fully-integrated with his team. Lulu joined the program when she was very young and suffered from Hyper Hip Dysplasia and global delays, making it almost impossible for her to even walk. After a year of participation, in addition to receiving physical therapy, Lulu is now able to participate fully and has so much more confidence. Charlie and Lulu's futures are bright, despite the challenges they face, and soccer is playing a huge role in their transformation!

Similar situations can be found all across Maryland and the District of Columbia each week as the Maryland State Youth Soccer Association affiliate clubs and leagues administer soccer programs designed to strengthen communities and provide opportunities.

If you are not currently playing soccer, then please consider doing so today! Visit msysa.org to find a club near you and to learn more about the power of soccer and the great work that is being done within our community!



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STATE YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION
1976-2021