

# History

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AYSO was established in the Los Angeles area in 1964 with nine teams. It was the dream of a group of devoted soccer enthusiasts who started the organization in a garage. Today, AYSO has 50,000 teams and over 500,000 players. It also employs 50 people at the AYSO National Office in Torrance, Calif.

Over the years, AYSO has created many valuable programs and concepts. Most notably, AYSO revolutionized youth sports with its "Everyone Plays<sup>®</sup>" and "Balanced Teams" philosophies. In AYSO, each child who registers is guaranteed to play at least half of every game. To help create evenly matched games, all AYSO players are placed on new or "balanced" teams each year. These decisions are made based on each player's skill level and the overall ability of the team.

Since its establishment, AYSO has continued to grow and offer its membership relevant programs.

## Early Growth and International Presence

In 1971, two San Fernando Valley residents developed AYSO's first girls program. Today, a corporate sponsor has joined with AYSO as the organization's first official sponsor of its national girl's initiative. Currently, 40 percent of AYSO's players are girls.

In the mid 70s, an AYSO coach chartered new territory as he welcomed the organization's first player with Down Syndrome. As a result of this landmark union, soccer was introduced into the Special Olympics. Today, AYSO offers its membership the Very Important Player (VIP) program for kids with special needs. VIP boasts 75 programs and 1,500 players.

In 1995, two AYSO parents established the first AYSO program in Moscow. Today, AYSO programs exist in the U.S. Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and interest continues from Americans abroad looking to bring the values and philosophies of AYSO to expatriates and local communities alike.

AYSO is supported by 125,000 volunteers. Parents donate their time as coaches, referees, team parents, administrators or sponsors. In 1998, AYSO unveiled its new

Coach Certification and Safe Haven programs. Each was designed to strengthen the organization's role in child protection. Although AYSO is primarily a youth sports organization, it realizes the importance of providing a safe and healthy atmosphere for children. AYSO is continually working to improve the education of its volunteers in the fields of child development, human behavior, and sports psychology. A strong emphasis is placed on ethics and sportsmanship and the development of the whole child.



AYSO is a National Association of the United States Soccer Federation. Through the years, the organization has also maintained relations with organizations such as the National Council of Youth Sports, Girls Scouts USA, the National Association for Sports and Physical Education, People to People, Optimists International, Police Athletic Leagues, the National Alliance for Youth Sports, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, YMCA, the United States Soccer Federation, and the Character Counts program. In addition, AYSO works closely with 20 corporations that are part of the organization's National Team of Sponsors.

AYSO has been the leader in establishing groundbreaking youth soccer programs in the United States. The organization is proud to have paved the road for youth soccer and looks forward to meeting the challenges of the 21st century.