

# Youth Sports Program

## Overview



- **Program Objective:** Increase physical activity among youth on base through introduction to sports and overall functional movement
- **MTF:** 29 Palms
- **Implementation Dates:** August, 2013 – Present
- **To reach local point of contacts, visit [MilitaryInstallations](#)**
- **Total Force Fitness Domains:** Physical, Social, Behavioral

## Program Description



- Kids age 3-15 participate in a comprehensive youth sports program throughout the school year, led by coaches (all volunteers from Navy/Marines)
  - Extensive fitness program also offered for children who are home schooled
- Main sports (soccer, football, basketball and baseball) are complemented by specialized programs in cheerleading, tennis, and track
- Program focuses not only on teaching skills required for that sport, but on overall functional movement and how to use one's body

## Evidence of Program Effectiveness



- **Over 350 kids** participate in programs throughout the year, all of which are co-ed
- Participants take **FitnessGram** (certified physical test) at beginning and end of each season to measure progress over time; data is tracked by program leaders
- Program provides coaches with materials to deliver a different **targeted message** each week to team (topics include self-confidence, nutrition, leadership)
- **High participation rates** at summer sports camps that complement regular season program
- Single Marines are often coaches- -> gives them responsibility, leadership, and community

## Costs and Required Resources



- 3 FTE required in-season
  - All coaches are volunteers
- Program cost: \$38,000 (includes uniforms, equipment, awards)
- Additional costs to base (not included): field maintenance
- Fees received: \$72,000

## Lessons Learned



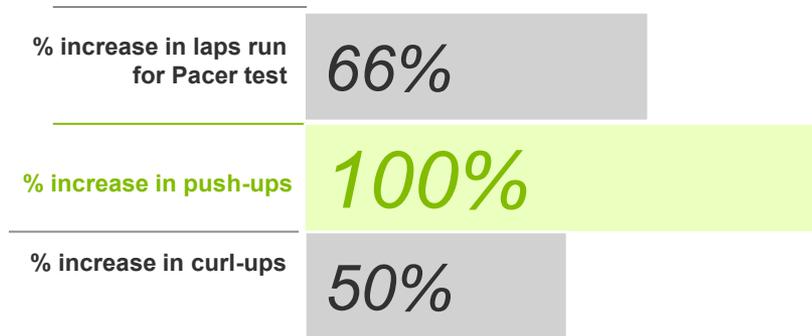
- If possible, hire coaches with first-hand experience and passion for the sport to lead that specific program (ie. Tennis coach played previously and has led the program to success)
- Empower coaches by giving them opportunity to pick practice time, team name/color; give them ownership to increase enthusiasm, commitment
- Through discount in registration fee, incentivize older kids to join town leagues to grow athletically, develop outside relationships from earlier age
- In youngest age group (3-5 yrs.), distribute trophies to **all participants**; in older age groups, award trophies for **first place teams only** in order to promote healthy competition and responsibility

# Analysis of the effectiveness of the Youth Sports Program

## FitnessGram Data: Getting Stronger

By tracking data pre- and post-season, program leaders **document significant improvement in participants' physical fitness** over time.<sup>1</sup>

- 7 year old male improved fitness across the board after youth football season



## Marketing Strategy: How to Get the Word Out?

In order to sign up participants, program leaders cover all their bases:



- Set up kiosk at the Exchange and incentivize parents to sign up their kids by **offering 10% off coupon on all athletic equipment**
- Distribute flyers** in students' mailboxes at school
- Advertise prominently at **Semper Fit facilities** on base
- Conduct outreach via email** to all previous players and coaches to gauge interest

<sup>1</sup> Data was first collected during the 2013-4 season but was not analyzed extensively; further analysis will take place once data from subsequent years is collected.

## Spotlight: Community Partnerships

The Youth Sports Program partners in innovative ways with a variety of associations and groups in the broader community

### Engaging Role Models

- Attempted to contract with a local college whose students could assist with sports programs and serve as role models to kids on base from both an athletic and educational perspective
- Though sponsoring the partnership proved too costly at 29 Palms, the model remains an excellent way of connecting kids with the larger community and could be implemented elsewhere



### Connecting with Town Athletic Leagues

- In the process of developing a travel baseball league and selecting high-performing kids on base to try out for existing travel leagues in the community
- Funneling kids in earlier to town leagues to help prepare them for the level of competition in middle and high school

### Looking Beyond Borders: British Soccer Camp

- British soccer players visit base each summer to conduct an extremely popular youth soccer camp (~150 participants/year)
- Players housed with families on/off base, participate in extracurricular activities with camp athletes
- An additional camp will be held off base in 2014 and made available to community, drawing from a larger participant base and fostering community collaboration