

NEWS OF SPORTS

Celebrating Soccer In America

(NAPSA)—Youth soccer is alive and kicking. Interest in the sport is at its highest level ever, with more than 19 million children six to 19 playing the game on city streets and suburban pitches.

More kids are participating in organized soccer than pee-wee football, youth basketball or Little League baseball. For these children, soccer is more than a pastime, it's a passion.

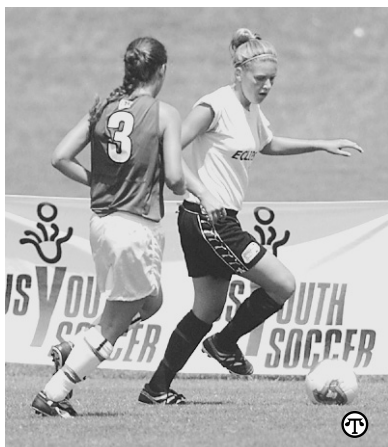
Recognizing the impact and importance the sport of soccer plays in the day-to-day lives of America's families, US Youth Soccer, the nation's largest youth sports association, is spearheading the first annual Youth Soccer Month in America in September.

Why is soccer so popular? Because it offers children the opportunity to participate in a healthy lifestyle, be physically active and develop social skills while making new friends.

Throughout Youth Soccer Month, US Youth Soccer will highlight messages that illustrate "Celebrating Soccer in America," the theme for the inaugural year. Each week during Youth Soccer Month a different message will be promoted.

- **Fitness:** The health and fitness benefits of playing soccer.
- **Friendship:** The friends and fun kids get from playing soccer go beyond the field.
- **Family:** Playing soccer brings families together.
- **Participation:** Whether recreational or competitive, playing soccer is easy and affordable.

Additionally, during Youth Soccer Month there will be national



Youth soccer is among the fastest-growing sports in the country.

and local events designed to raise awareness of the benefits of participating in "the beautiful game." Youth Soccer Month also highlights the various programs available to children interested in participating in soccer, including inner-city, special needs, recreational and elite soccer programs.

The messages of Youth Soccer Month mirror those of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports—the importance of physical activity and fitness and exercise and their link to good health. It also furthers President Bush's vision of a healthier United States, where citizens are physically active every day, value nutrition and avoid risky behaviors.

For more information on Youth Soccer Month or to learn how to participate in organized soccer in your area call 1-800-4SOCCER or visit YouthSoccerMonth.org.