

WILLIAM CRAMP

FIT FLYER

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La Liga teaches many life lessons

Players in Philadelphia's La Liga del Barrio sign up to play basketball, flag football, and track and field. But while polishing their skills, they also learn sportsmanship and how to build connections with kids from different parts of the city.

La Liga "brings families together and other players in the league; it brings them all together," said Mr. Raymond Alvarez, president and chief executive officer, in an interview with *Fit Flyer* reporters. "It's a healthy environment for them and for us."

Basketball coach Joshua Montes said that La Liga thinks of each child as family and that all staff members strive to encourage and help each student athlete. The program is based in North Philadelphia for kids 6 and older.

(See **Participating** on Page 2)



Illustration by a *Fit Flyer* reporter

Serving youth sports for 25 years

La Liga had its start in January 2000, when Philadelphia 76ers General Manager Pat Croce reached out to City Councilman Angel Ortiz, telling him the team wanted to do something to keep kids safe and help the Latino community. Mr. Ortiz suggested starting a basketball league, and then he called Mr. Alvarez and asked him to work on it.

"The first year, we distributed flyers, used word of mouth, and we put it out in the community that we were putting together a basketball league," Mr. Alvarez said. "We got 200 kids who participated. Now we have double that."

Mr. Alvarez, as president and CEO of the organization, works to put the sports schedules together and get all the uniforms. He said he also makes sure the players have good grades and behavior in school.

"When you come to the gym before you start playing, you have to provide us with proof that you're doing well academically.

"That report you have to take to your homeroom teacher at school, and they have to sign off as well as your parent," Mr. Alvarez said.

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Participating in sports has benefits

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Participating in group sports has both physical and mental benefits, according to the Mayo Clinic, a hospital and research center. It helps you get stronger and also gives you a sense of belonging, the clinic said on its website. You have people to cheer you on and make you want to continue doing what you like, even if you could lose a game or it's hard.

"What I enjoy most about coaching with La Liga is the family atmosphere that the program has. They do offer a competitiveness for the kids, but at the same time they allow them to grow and develop," Coach Montes said.

By participating in La Liga, Mr. Alvarez said, kids can learn how to be team players and can make new friends by improving their social skills. The kids also must "use their brains," he said, because coaches are giving directions they need to follow.

Like all the other La Liga coaches, Coach Montes is a volunteer. He's been coaching for nine years, he said, and it makes him feel good because it's a chance to help so many kids play sports in safe spaces.



Raymond Alvarez

Many of the coaches are former La Liga players. "Now they're with their kids. I think because they grew up in La Liga, they know the values and family atmosphere and they want to pass that on to not just their kids but to other kids as

well," Mr. Alvarez said.

"One of the main reasons I started coaching at La Liga was to be able to help the young children develop at the game of basketball," said Coach Montes. "At the time I was strictly doing basketball training with my son and nephews, and my older brother encouraged me to begin coaching for La Liga."

La Liga also teaches kids that it's OK to lose, Mr. Alvarez said. "We console the kids and help them understand that it's OK to cry," he said. "Maybe next time they'll be the ones winning the championship."

He said he gets emotional when he thinks of giving back to the community for 25 years. "It makes me feel absolutely wonderful," he said.

—By *Fit Flyer* staff

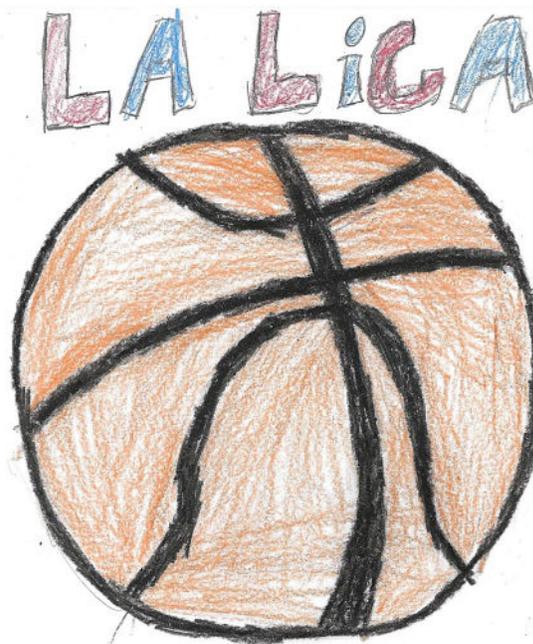


Illustration by a *Fit Flyer* reporter

Making a difference

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If a player starts to struggle academically or behaviorally, Mr. Alvarez said, La Liga is there to help. "We will try to give you the resources you need to help you," he said. For example, "if something's wrong and you're not doing well in math, we will try to get you some help."

The season starts in January and runs through April. No one is left out and everybody gets a uniform.

Players practice and compete at Mariana Bracetti Academy Charter School in Torredale. The cost to join the league is \$60. Mr. Alvarez said the league will help families who can't afford the fee.

For more information about La Liga del Barrio, visit: laligadelbarrio.com. —By *Fit Flyer* staff

William Cramp Fit Flyer

The *Fit Flyer* is a publication of William Cramp Elementary School in the School District of Philadelphia. Fifth-grade staff members include Demetri Benene, Aiden Brown, Alberto Colon, Aloe Colon, Daniel Gonzalez, Elias Gonzalez, Zoey Gonzalez, Amiyah Hardaway, Shemar Hinton-Taylor, Amauri Huggins, Ivelisse Ortiz, Cataleya Rivera, Luna Rivera, Jayceon Rodriguez, and Kailyn Santana. The *Fit Flyer's* faculty advisor is Ms. Morales and the school principal is Dr. Rodriguez.

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Pajamas come to William Cramp

Two school leaders from a Delaware County elementary school brought a new pair of pajamas for every kid at William Cramp in early December.

Students at Loomis Elementary in Broomall volunteered to donate the new pajamas in a “pajama drive,” according to Ms. Jaime Smyth, the school’s principal and a former teacher at William Cramp.

Collecting the pajamas teaches Loomis students what’s really special about partnering with people they don’t even know, said Noelle Meehan, school counselor at Loomis, which is about 14 miles west of William Cramp.

Ms. Smyth said the reason Loomis choose to donate pajamas to Cramp is because of her work at Cramp as both a teacher and a school-based teacher leader for 17 years. Loomis started its pajama drive in December 2020, according to Ms. Smyth. “Cramp School is my home,” Ms. Smyth said. She even started tearing up as she spoke about her feelings about Cramp.

She said she often talks and texts with several current Cramp staff to stay connected to the school.

Ms. Smyth said that when her students have extra clothing items, such as winter coats, they often donate the extras to others.

“Cramp is the only school that we donate specifically to. We also donate to local women’s shelters, a homeless shelter, an anti-domestic abuse support group, and a few churches. All donations are in Delaware County and Philadelphia and must be pre-approved by the pajama program, which is called Beyond Bedtime,” Ms. Smyth said.

Cramp students received their pajamas the week before winter break, so they could wear them for Pajama Day, which was held on December 18.

“Pajama Day was fun. People were able to grab pajamas and it felt nice to all wear them together,” said one reporter. “It felt really nice spending time with friends in our pajamas,” said Isabella.

—By Jayceon Rodriguez and *Fit Flyer* staff

Cub Corner

Book review: *Why you need to sleep*

Sleep is for Everyone

Written by Paul Showers

Illustrated by Wendy Watson

Everyone needs sleep, says Paul Showers in this book.

When you sleep, your brain can rest and your body is getting ready for the next day, the author says. When you sleep, you dream and you heal.



Kindergarten reporters in Mrs. Krut’s class learned that scientists who studied sleep found that when they stayed awake for several days, they felt tired and grumpy. Your brain might not work well enough to read, play games, or even watch TV, and you might start to be mean to your friends.

The reporters enjoyed the book, mostly because the author writes about animals and the funny ways that they sleep.

They were especially surprised to learn that chickens sleep with their eyelids up instead of down like people. Also, snakes have no eyelids, so they never have closed eyes while they’re sleeping.

The illustrations were also interesting to look at because they were a collage and you could see the different materials used to make the different pictures.

The kindergarten reporters said this book would be good for elementary students or for anyone who wants to learn more about sleep.

Cub Corner

Try yoga! It can reduce stress

Second-grade *Fit Flyer* reporters in Ms. Salkin's class recently practiced some yoga poses as part of their research into stress. They said they got warm from the exercise but also felt more relaxed when they were done.

Yoga is a type of movement that can reduce stress, they learned. When you practice yoga poses, your breathing slows down and you can relax.

Stress is something your body feels when you're worried about something, says KidsHealth.org, a health information website.

Everyone experiences stress, and it's important to find ways that can help you manage your stress.



Second-grade reporters illustrate two yoga poses: cat/cow (above) and tree pose (left)

The KidsHealth experts recommend several ways to manage stress: breathing, art, music, and moving.

Some of the poses the reporters practiced include a tree pose, a chair pose, a cat and cow pose, a seated twist, and a child's pose.

Check out ways to take care of your heart

Your heart is a muscle and needs healthy food and exercise to stay healthy, according to KidsHealth.org, a health information website.

Second-grade reporters in Ms. Salkin's and Ms. Quintana's classes learned about some of the important things you can do to keep your heart healthy.

Get enough exercise such as running, swimming, biking, walking, and dancing.

Eat healthy food such as fruits and vegetables. Avoid too much sugar.

Get enough sleep.

You need your heart to do important work. Experts at the American Heart Association say your heart pumps blood to all the parts of your body so it works well.