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## GOALS September '17 Update

The Summer of '17. What a summer it has been for GOALS! Dreamscape Too officially was opened in mid-summer for youth play on multiple new athletic facilities. Hundreds of teen GOALS Cadets served gallantly in our "Summer of Service" through some of the hottest and most humid California days in memory. Our Anaheim community partners with Accelerate Change Together (ACT) pulled together to launch another year (IV) of collaborative community based programs. Our coaching staff recruited, trained and deployed a team of 10 AmeriCorps Summer Associates to boost our service efforts, mentor youth and build our after-school curriculum and organizing efforts. And our overall program planning and community outreach efforts have led to our expansion into local high schools, revival of our "off-track" A+ Opportunity Academy for nearby elementary schools, and more diverse after school opportunities rolling out this coming year for youngsters involved with GOALS across the greater Anaheim region.

Now about that Dreamscape "Too". This massive sports complex development was graced with summer visits from multiple well-wishers, sponsors and local officials (along with large numbers of youngsters) as the facility opened in mid-July with the debut of a GOALS Cadets summer basketball league. The venue? Why Lakers Legends Court of course – which is the centerpiece of this nearly 1 acre site that boasts Ben's Asphalt Track, and two flanking sports arenas to accommodate virtually any team athletic game imaginable. Berg Electric Arena and The GOALS Pond, which will accommodate ice skating plus other hockey related sports, are going to prove to be great attractions for area groups involved with GOALS. Personal and written thanks plus facility posted tributes were created to more than 40 key individuals along with 15 major sponsor organizations. While this project was complex and lengthy (as it stretched over 4 years from start to finish) the end result offers the opportunity for even more unique and healthy team sports activities for underserved area youth.

ACT-Anaheim was put into motion several years ago as the brainchild of local leaders to help address systemic social challenges in central Anaheim. Philanthropic individuals, community organizations and prominent business supporters led by Disneyland along with the two major league sports franchises (Anaheim Ducks and LA Angels of Anaheim) chipped in millions of dollars along with their ideas and technical support to tackle needs of all sorts. Today Disneyland still is making the same high level of commitment and hopes others will make extra efforts to sustain theirs. Certainly, GOALS is a proud advocate of this broad based endeavor and with continued help from ACT sponsors plans to expand program services into local high schools starting with pilot projects at Savanna High School and closer to the GOALLand complex, Anaheim High School. To the west we will also be planting a GOALS flag with Valencia High School and will look forward to some interscholastic opportunities – especially through some ice hockey competition, not to mention a major infusion of high school service into next summer's GOALS Cadets expanded programs.

As the GOALS Academy free public elementary charter school opened in mid-August, so did our companion after school program dubbed "GOALS For GOALS Academy". The "GA" is at full enrollment now, and entering year 3 of the 5-year charter from the Anaheim Elementary School District. Right on the heels of those operational openings came the kick-off of our GOALS For Valadez junior high school after school education and safety program 5 days weekly. Record enrollment has pushed participation there to nearly 200 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade youngsters who attend from Anaheim and Placentia communities. Multiple other GOALS sites will awaken after their brief summer siestas, with Oak View (Huntington Beach), Maxwell (west Anaheim), Rio Vista (Anaheim), Melrose (Placentia) added to the after-school outreach while Edison (Anaheim) and Mann (Anaheim) schools enjoy access through our A+ Academy programs weekly.

Heroes arise in many forms and develop through different circumstances. Two of my heroes have faced staggering challenges, yet persevere with dignity, courage and never-ending strength. Henry Ramirez a decorated GOALS alumnus, served multiple military tours in Iraq and Afghanistan and then ascended to firefighting service with the OC Fire Authority. He was seriously injured this summer – narrowly avoiding death – while fighting a fire in south Orange County and ended up with major spinal surgery with the potential that his front-line duty may be a thing of the past. However, knowing Henry, he will find a new way to serve his community and country. Meanwhile, 13-year-old Jose Parra valiantly has battled back in his skirmish with leukemia, and recently had a bone marrow transplant with a big assist from his older sister. As Jose continues his recovery we will be continuing our "Hope for Jose" efforts to support his entire family. There is no doubt he will persevere on his journey to improve, recover, and resume his greatest passion – helping other children in GOALS. Hope to see you during the fall...

*Dave Wilk*

**Growth Opportunities through Athletics, Learning & Service**

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