

# About America Scores & Balanced For Life

*America Scores is:*

- ♣ An after-school program that inspires urban youth to get active through regular exercise of their minds and their bodies
- ♣ Reaches mostly inner-city students
- ♣ Trains public elementary-school teachers to be soccer and poetry/hip-hop coaches for teams of children who commit 5 days a week to these activities

*The America Scores Balanced for Life Campaign for Healthy Kids Will...*

- ♣ Provide nutrition education in 12 inner city schools nationwide throughout the school year;
- ♣ Provide Balanced for Life health and nutrition educational materials to students after school;
- ♣ Provide Balanced for Life materials at America Scores community Family Nights;
- ♣ Put Balanced for Life posters in schools;
- ♣ Feature Balanced for Life educational material in SCORES SCOOP newsletters sent to parents, teachers, school officials;
- ♣ Create a Balanced for Life health & nutrition section on America Scores Web Page and Balanced for Life features in Kicker! magazine sent to thousands of school and community leaders.

*Through America Scores We Will:*

Arrange Teacher/Student Dietitian Training sessions

- ♣ Dietitians will visit schools in four cities;
- ♣ Sessions will educate teachers & students about nutrition & physical activity;

Sponsor Four *Balanced for Life Jamborees!*

- ♣ Washington, DC, San Francisco/Oakland, Chicago and Denver, CO;
- ♣ Jamborees! are high profile media events;
- ♣ Involve hundreds of SCORES children in each city;
- ♣ Are day long community celebrations where students play back-to-back soccer matches.

*Balanced for Life Jamborees!* feature:

- ♣ Hundreds of parents, teachers, school officials and community leaders watching kids play soccer;
- ♣ Start with students in Balanced for Life uniforms parading around the stadium with their student-created, Olympic-like signs;
- ♣ Students play back-to-back soccer matches;
- ♣ Include areas where students can get their photos taken with soccer stars like Mia Hamm and Freddy Adu;
- ♣ Have fun activities like moonwalks and face painting.

## **When Kids Get Involved, America SCORES!**

**What is America SCORES?** America SCORES uses soccer, creative writing and community service to instill in our children a life-long dedication to education, healthy living and civic responsibility.

**What are the major components of the program?** The America SCORES after-school program meets 10 weeks each fall and spring season on public-school grounds. On a weekly basis, separate teams of 50% male and 50% female students, ages 8-12, participate in:

- ♣ Poetry and Community Service Workshops; 2 days/week
- ♣ Soccer practice; 2 days/week
- ♣ Soccer games; 1 day/week

**What are the major issues addressed by the program?**

- ♣ **Literacy:** At-risk youth are engaged in a language-enriching curriculum that focuses on poetry, vocabulary building, written and oral communication, and self-expression.
- ♣ **Physical Health:** At-risk youth engage in 6-8 hours of vigorous physical exercise each week and develop a life-long appreciation of sports and health-enhancing behaviors.
- ♣ **Community Service and Civic Responsibility:** Elementary-age youth implement community-service projects. Students learn that they can create change through active involvement in their communities. This leads to a sense of empowerment and ownership.
- ♣ **School Bonding:** Students are provided with positive activities and adult role models daily during otherwise dangerous after-school hours and are motivated to attend school regularly to participate in the school-based program.

**How do the public schools benefit?**

- ♣ Public, elementary-school teachers are hired and trained to be “soccer coaches,” thereby adding to their skill base and their rapport with students.
- ♣ Public, elementary-school teachers are hired and trained to be “writing coaches,” thereby adding to their skill base and their rapport with students.
- ♣ Parents and community mentors are actively encouraged to become involved as volunteers and participants in activities on public-school grounds.
- ♣ Positive attitudes and media coverage are generated about public schools.



## Why is America SCORES Important?

### **Leaving children unsupervised threatens the well-being of our communities.**

- Fifteen million American children are left unsupervised during non-school hours.
- Children who do not take part in after-school programs score significantly lower on aptitude tests and very poorly in classroom assignments.
- Juvenile crime triples when the school bell rings at the end of the day.
- Children are at four times the risk of being victims of a violent crime during unsupervised after-school hours.
- Children who are left unsupervised for 11 or more hours a week experience twice the risk of substance abuse as those who are under some form of adult supervision.
- Unsupervised children are three times more likely to become teen parents.

### **Children with low early literacy are more likely to drop out of school and turn to crime.**

- Sixty percent of inner-city children do not graduate from high school. Of those that do, 40% are only reading at a fourth-grade level.
- Academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone's reading skill at the end of third grade. A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from high school.
- Children who read for pleasure generally are better readers.

### **Lack of physical activity is one of the primary causes of childhood obesity.**

- Over 65% of urban school children do not participate in extracurricular activities that involve any form of exercise.
- One in three urban children is likely to be overweight or obese.
- Type 2 diabetes, previously considered an adult disease, has increased dramatically in children and adolescents. Overweight and obesity are closely linked to Type 2 diabetes.
- The economic cost of obesity in the United States was about \$117 billion in 2000.
- It is recommended that children participate in at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week.

### **The American people believe this must change.**

- Twice as many parents want after-school programs as are currently available.
- Nine out of 10 Americans—both parents and non-parents—think that after-school programs should be available to all youth today.

**Soccer and Poetry do change the world.**

[www.AmericaSCORES.org](http://www.AmericaSCORES.org)

**Paul Caccamo**  
*America SCORES President*

Mr. Caccamo is a 20-year veteran of the non-profit sector. Mr. Caccamo received his master's degree in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and his bachelor's degree at Georgetown University's Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service. He received numerous academic awards and citations for leadership, including one of Harvard's most prestigious graduate awards for innovation in the design of social service programs. America SCORES is the first full-time passion of Mr. Caccamo, whose consulting background included more than 30 different agencies in the five years prior to taking over the organization from its founder in 2000.

**Sources for Statistics:**

*1997 Annual Average Figures from the Current Population Survey*, U.S. Department of Labor.

*The National Study of Before- and After-School Programs*, Seppanen, et al., 1993.

*Afterschool Crime or After-School Programs: Tuning in the Prime Time for Violent Juvenile Crime and Implications for National Policy*, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 1997.

U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. *Adolescent Time Use, Risky Behavior and Outcomes: An Analysis of National Data*, 1995

*Afterschool Crime or After-School Programs: Tuning in the Prime Time for Violent Juvenile Crime and Implications for National Policy*, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, 1997.

National Opinion Research Center, August 1998

U.S. Census Bureau, Urban Institute estimates, 2000

Nationwide poll—sponsored by the C.S. Mott Foundation and JCPenney—among 1,100 adults, 18 years of age or older, who are registered to vote, and includes an oversample of 100 parents of school-age children. The survey was conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates, Inc. and the Tarrance Group between July 27-29, 1999.

National Center for Juvenile Justice, 1999

Jill Posner and Deborah Lowe Vandell, "Low-Income Children's After-School Care: Are There Beneficial Effects of After-School Programs?" *Child Development*, 1994.

Centers for Disease Control, United States Surgeon General's Office

## About Snackwise

**The Snackwise Nutrition Rating System** was developed by researchers at the Columbus Children's Hospital's Borden Center for Nutrition and Wellness and gives young people an easy-to-use system that helps them better understand how different products fit into an overall balanced diet.

Using a software program, Snackwise evaluates ten components that represent major nutritional concerns for American children: total energy, total and saturated fats, fibers, sugars, protein, calcium, iron and vitamins A and C. Through a system of assigned points for each of these ten components, adding or subtracting based on whether the component makes a positive or negative contribution, each food is assigned a total point value which translates into an easy-to-follow color-coding chart:

- ♣ Foods with the least amount of points were deemed least nutritious and assigned the **color red, and labeled "choose rarely."**
- ♣ Foods that were rated the most nutritious were assigned **green, and labeled "choose frequently."**
- ♣ And snack foods receiving points in the middle of the range (for being nutritious) were assigned **yellow, and labeled "choose moderately."**

For more information about Snackwise, visit [www.snackwise.org](http://www.snackwise.org).