

Youth Sports: Teams For Kids

Youth sports provide an opportunity for peer bonding, exercise, fun and learning, all rolled into one organized activity. Teams for kids can be found for many sports, on the community level. As a parent, do you have a passion for a particular sport? Is it something you could begin to teach your child, on an appropriate beginner's level? Is there an after-school program at a local parks and recreation center you can enroll your child in?

According to the **National Federation of State High School Associations**, during the year of 2007-2008, over seven million high school students participated in sports programs, and the numbers keep rising. More girls are showing up to play, and new sports are making their debuts at schools and parks around the country. Over 54% of high school students are now participating in a sport.

Encouraging participation in a sport is a good thing, as it provides multiple benefits for both kids and families. Getting your child off the computer, away from the television or video game is important. Child obesity is a problem and exercise is a part of the solution. Of course, a healthy diet must be part of weight management, but once a child is enrolled in a sport, guidance towards a healthier regimen becomes more likely. When your child is part of a sports team, it gives parents a chance to attend games, to volunteer in many ways, in order to help the coach or manager, keep organized. Bringing snacks, attending games to cheer on the team, and planning team parties, builds new friendships and adds an element of community and caring, which kids appreciate.

Team sports give school kids an opportunity to focus away from stressors such as grades, peer problems and issues at home. With their team, they are able to relax and concentrate on the task at hand, while doing something healthy for body and spirit.

New sports are becoming more readily accessible. Lacrosse is gaining in popularity, as is bowling. More girls are taking up basketball. A little research online will lead you to a youth program in your school district, which might just translate into a lifetime love of a particular sport. For information regarding the ever-popular sport of soccer, the AYSO (American Youth Soccer Organization) can be helpful, at www.soccer.org.

If you are crazy for baseball, you might want to try a little league softball team for your child. Go to www.littleleague.org. to find a team near you.

Lacrosse is a sport which is taking off in the United States. At www.youthlacrosse.usa.com you can learn more about it.

Bowling anyone? At www.bowl.com/youth you can network and find a youth team.

Tennis programs exist around the country at the beginning level. Many local parks have courts and teaching clinics. At www.usta.com you can find out how to get your junior player involved.

Pick a sport that seems to suit your child and go for it. Kids today are challenged to get good grades, be involved in community affairs, be responsible at home and cope with the world's problems on a daily basis. Sports provide a release, an opportunity to engage wholeheartedly in a physical and mental activity. Over half of all high school students in America engage in a sport. Hopefully, the upward trend will continue.

