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Lackawanna Partners with U.S. Soccer Foundation and The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation to Open New Youth Soccer Facility

\$100,000 mini-pitch grant will enhance access to youth soccer programs for city residents

LACKAWANNA, N.Y. (Monday, October 18, 2021) – Today, the City of Lackawanna celebrated the grand opening of a new youth soccer mini-pitch at Victory Playground on South Park Avenue in the city's Third Ward. This new facility, funded by a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Soccer Foundation and The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation, will provide greater access to soccer programs for the city's young residents. The U.S. Soccer Foundation's *Soccer for Success* program partner at Independent Health Foundation played an integral role in site selection.

'The City of Lackawanna is honored to receive this generous grant from the U.S. Soccer Foundation and The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation to expand our youth soccer programs,' said Mayor Annette Iafallo. 'Through their generosity, made possible by the Independent Health Foundation, boys and girls throughout Lackawanna with now have even more opportunities to enjoy the game of soccer under the guidance of skilled volunteer coaches committed to creating an inclusive and fun learning environment.'

The grant funding provided by the U.S. Soccer Foundation and The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation is part of the two foundations' efforts to assist local youth-serving organizations in underserved communities expand recreational opportunities that help children develop on and off the field to create inclusive, safe spaces.

"We're excited that together with our partners, we can bring this new mini-pitch to the Lackawanna community," said Sarah Pickens, Associate Vice President of Programs at the U.S. Soccer Foundation. "This safe place to play and our *Soccer for Success* program that will be run on it, will help make our sport and its benefits more accessible and inclusive, regardless of gender or background."

"The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation is proud to partner with the U.S. Soccer Foundation to provide a safe and fun mini-pitch for the youth of Lackawanna," said Aimee Watters, Executive Director of The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation. "We know that sports make people better and are excited to support a space where young athletes of all skill levels can enjoy the game of soccer."

The Independent Health Foundation's recommendation of Lackawanna for the mini-pitch was based on the organization's affiliation with the U.S. Soccer Foundation and The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation partnership to increase access to soccer for girls and women through its [United for Girls](#) efforts. Independent Health Foundation runs the U.S. Soccer Foundation's *Soccer for Success* program and is currently part of a small cohort of program operators across the country that is exploring new strategies for engagement, recruitment, and retainment of young girls and women in soccer.

“The Independent Health Foundation is proud to provide *Soccer for Success* to the Lackawanna community since 2018.” said Jen Mitri, Manager of Community Initiatives for the Independent Health Foundation. “The addition of this mini-pitch will help us to expand our programming to include a girl’s only team through *United for Girls* as well as continue to offer our co-ed *Soccer for Success* program. We are committed to providing opportunities for youth to have a safe space to grow and learn through the game of soccer.”

The Lackawanna Recreation Department will collaborate with the Independent Health Foundation and other youth organizations to schedule soccer programming at the Victory Playground mini-pitch for the spring/summer 2022 season. Information will be posted to the Recreation page of the City of Lackawanna website (www.lackawannany.gov) once a schedule is established in early 2022.

About the City of Lackawanna

Lackawanna, N.Y. is a culturally diverse city of nearly 20,000 located on the shores of Lake Erie, minutes south of the City of Buffalo. Lackawanna offers attractive economic development options for new and expanding businesses, including those associated with Renaissance Commerce Park, a partnership effort to redevelop 200+ acres of the former Bethlehem Steel site. Lackawanna is home to Our Lady of Victory Basilica, a national shrine, the Carnegie-designed Lackawanna Library and the Buffalo and Erie County Botanical Gardens and Olmstead-designed South Park are within walking distance. For more information visit www.lackawannany.gov

About the U.S. Soccer Foundation

The U.S. Soccer Foundation’s programs are the national model for sports-based youth development in underserved communities. Since its founding in 1994, the Foundation has established programs proven to help children embrace an active and healthy lifestyle while nurturing their personal growth beyond sports. Its cost-effective, high-impact initiatives offer safe environments where kids and communities thrive. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Soccer Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information visit www.ussoccerfoundation.org or follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

About The DICK’S Sporting Goods Foundation

The DICK’S Sporting Goods Foundation is a tax exempt 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation with a mission to inspire and enable sports participation. It was created by DICK’S Sporting Goods, Inc. as a private corporate foundation to support DICK’S charitable and philanthropic activities.

About the Independent Health Foundation

Established in 1992, the Independent Health Foundation works to improve the health and well-being of Western New York residents through awareness, prevention, education and other programs focused on community health priorities. For more information on the Foundation’s activities, visit www.independenthealth.com/foundation.