



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE GREATEST LOSS OF ALL

In small towns, urban ghettos and upscale suburbs, children are being lost to the death, the drugs, and the destruction associated with youth gangs. And the loss of every youngster leaves families with a lifetime of grief and anger.

One of the great things about sports is in the end you walk away a winner or a loser. When you keep score, the final tally easily identifies who gets the a "W" and who gets the "L". No confusion, and in most cases, quite pain-free too.

Through this experience, other indicators emerge. "Personal Best" and "How You Played the Game" are examples of determining whether or not you are winner or a loser. Some youngsters learn these lessons at home, others through the responsible adult supervision that accompanies many youth sports experiences. Still, others learn this lesson on the streets, from positive role models both young and old.

So you can understand how trivial losing a game can be compared to youngsters that lose their youth to the death, the drugs, and the destruction associated with youth gangs. Seldom do you walk alone in your victories and defeats. Others share the joys and sorrows, the ups and downs experienced by every child, making the gang related losses more dramatic when you consider that most get involved in gangs because they were bored or had nothing else to do.

It sounds so simple, but it really gets complicated to join a team and not a gang. Every child does not have the opportunity to have legitimate access to neighborhood sports facilities. Most can't afford participation fees. The shortage of responsible adult volunteers makes it tough to stage youth sports activities in areas that need the most intensive programs.

Ironically, it doesn't take much for a youth gang to get the ball rolling. However, the price paid by that boy or girl and their family, in the end becomes very costly.

When a child becomes hardened and committed to crime, exposed to and addicted to drugs and alcohol, physically injured, scarred or murdered; that indeed is the greatest loss of all. Kids should be recruited to teams, equally as hard as they are recruited to gangs. And when they join, it is everyone's job to hold on to them.

For these kids, winning and losing could mean the difference between life and death. In these terms, winning is important. Sports contests are great, but the world needs more winners in the biggest game of all, THE GAME OF LIFE!

Michael Brunker
Executive Director

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**"A LIFE IS NOT
IMPORTANT
EXCEPT IN
THE IMPACT
IT HAS ON
OTHER LIVES."
~ JACKIE ROBINSON**

