



A friendly soccer match between young Afghan newcomers at Byrne Creek Community School and the awarding of cups and medals to the winning team.

ACSA reaches Afghan youth through sport and recreation

IN NEW WESTMINSTER AND BURNABY, BC, young Afghan refugees enjoyed a variety of sport and recreation opportunities – including volleyball, soccer, yoga, skill training and speed training.

These experiences made great impacts on these youth. It helped them discover a passion for sport. It encouraged social connections with one another. It also improved their mental and physical health.



ACSA CULTURAL & SPORT ASSOCIATION (ACSA),
BRITISH COLUMBIA

Canada

This project is funded by
the Government of Canada



Friendly soccer match between young Afghan newcomers at Byrne Creek Community School and here is during the game.



A friendly soccer match between young Afghan newcomers at Byrne Creek Community School and the participants shake hands at the start of the game.

“This was a very beautiful, heartwarming, friendly and intimate program... This opportunity helped newcomer youth and their families reduce their stress and feel good, motivated, and helped them learn life skills.”

Masooma (Roya) Sayed Hashim, CEO of the ACSA Cultural & Sport Association (ACSA)

Throughout the spring and summer of 2023, Afghan youth living in these communities were able to enjoy sport and recreation opportunities, thanks to funding from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association’s Reaching Each and Every One: A Community Sport Intervention program. This program, which was funded by Sport Canada’s Community Sport for All Initiative, seeks to remove barriers and increase sport participation rates for equity deserving groups across Canada.

“Thanks to this valuable help, we have been able to support young Afghan refugees in BC and integrate them into the community, and encourage them to trust and develop their skills and abilities,” says Masooma (Roya) Sayed Hashim, CEO of the ACSA Cultural & Sport Association (ACSA), which supports women, children and refugees through sports, arts, culture and entrepreneurship around the world. “This support of our organization will have a profound impact on our mission and the communities we serve.”

As newcomers to Canada, Masooma (Roya) says participants face many barriers to sport. They don’t have a dedicated space to participate in sport and recreation, where they can also connect with other Afghan newcomers. She adds that there is a lack of recreational and educational programs for refugees – who may also feel uneasy about participating in sport in a new environment.

To address these barriers, the ACSA partnered with Byrne Creek School and the Burnaby Community Centre to provide sport and recreation spaces to Afghan youth. They advertised these programming opportunities through social

media, community centres, schools, and refugee settlement organizations. Additionally, the ACSA was also able to purchase all the necessary equipment to run the programs.

The programming culminated in a soccer match between participants at Byrne Creek School, where teams, coaches and volunteers were awarded for their hard work. The organization also hosted a conference for participants where they received an evaluation of their progress throughout the program.

Overall, Masooma (Roya) says 25 Afghan youth were able to participate in the program, which also had ripple effects within their families.

“This was a very beautiful, heartwarming, friendly and intimate program,” Masooma (Roya) says. “This opportunity helped newcomer youth and their families reduce their stress and feel good, motivated, and helped them learn life skills.”

She adds that the funding helped further the ACSA’s mission of helping newcomers through sport opportunities, and helped enhance their programming.

“This support affirms our commitment to advancing the empowerment of newcomers and refugees and promoting the well-being of our community members through recreation and leisure programs. It is a testament to the importance of what we do,” she says. “This funding enabled us to take our initiatives to new heights, reach more people, and make a lasting positive impact on their lives through sport.” 🍁