



From Our Regional Commissioner, Kristen Leeds

We are so very grateful to all of our wonderful volunteers. It is a huge task: reserving and marking fields, training coaches and referees, ordering and allocating uniforms, keeping track of our many volunteers, and all the myriad tasks that go into putting 1,200 kids on soccer fields in Albuquerque in the spring and fall. I always think of AYSO soccer as a cooperative venture. We aren't a "win at all costs" traditional sports option; we are a group of concerned people who took matters into our own hands to create a new animal. A sports league where no one sits on the bench, where recruiting and "stacking" of teams don't diminish the competitive balance, where everyone is encouraged to be polite, civil and friendly to everyone else and we do it cheaper than any youth sports organization in the area!

Does that sound unrealistic? Think about it. \$99 a *year* buys you a uniform, trained coaches, trained referees, 16 games of soccer, and all the infrastructure that entails. How do we do it? The answer is all of you. Many hands make light work, and if everyone volunteers to do one small job, then no one is overburdened. Direct volunteers like coaches and assistant coaches get to spend quality time with their kids, and with other kids they haven't met before.

When you volunteer, you understand our organization better because you are a part of it. Unfortunately many parents refuse to help out, although some of our jobs are pretty easy. For example, the registration volunteer every team *must* provide only needs to work 4 hours in a year! Pretty light duty!

Since so few people help out, the ones who do are overworked, get burned out, and leave our ranks after a few years. This means we are in a constant crisis mode, unable to timely respond to the many demands on our time because emergencies keep popping up. We lose our institutional memory and have to keep reinventing the wheel when we lose volunteers. If everyone could find it in their hearts to help us out, the whole climate would be so much better for your children!

Next time you see your coach with an armload of cones, offer to help set them up! Help the team manager with the snack schedule. Volunteer to help with team pictures or trophies. How about a referee clinic? There are plenty of them on the web site, and we always need refs (since so many people like to yell at them for some strange reason). If you have experience leading people, in the armed forces, as an employer or middle manager in the business world, in athletics, then we always need board members, administrators, and commissioners. Look on our contact page for open positions and please consider helping out! It's all for the kids!