

Ohio State's LiFEsports Initiative, Katie Smith Provide Community With At-Home Kits



Ohio State's LiFEsports initiative, which signifies Learning in Fitness and Education through Sports, provides the youth with sports and recreation programs, usually at least 800 kids per year.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused the program to find other ways to achieve its goals and assist the community.

Team members for the initiative are continuing to develop alternatives to their typical programs, which includes an at-home guide created with the purpose of helping kids stay active on their own while preparing to return to in-person activities. LiFEsports partnered with the Lindy Infante Foundation to develop the guide.

"We started partnering with the Lindy Infante Foundation last year on some work in the community," said Rebecca Wade-Mdivanian, who is the director of operations for the LiFEsports initiative. "When COVID-19 hit, Stephanie reached out asking how they might help. After thinking for a while and having my own kids bored at home, it hit me that many of our kids might not have equipment at home. I called Stephanie, and we brainstormed what it might look together and created Sport in a Bag."

The Sport in a Bag project came together in an effort to provide young athletes with both equipment and guidance while they continue to live without sports. The bags include one jump rope, a basketball, soccer ball or football and a LiFEsports At Home instructional guide, so that the youngsters can stay active during the uncertain times accompanying the COVID-19 outbreak.

Members of the LiFEsports initiative and the Lindy Infante Foundation received a helping hand from a special former Ohio State women's basketball standout in Katie Smith, who was the 1996 Big Ten Player of the Year and a three-time Olympic gold medalist. Smith and the others distributed Sport in a Bag kits to 200 families at the Beatty Community Center in Columbus on May 8, but don't worry, they all remained safety-conscious.

"We looked at guidelines for food pickup stations across the city and mirrored those requirements," Wade-Mdivanian said of the May 8 distribution. "For instance, all our staff were prepared to wear masks, have hand sanitizer available and wear gloves. We also asked families not to leave their cars and it was a drive-up site where we placed the bags in their cars to minimize contact."

The distribution of Sport in a Bag kits marked the first large distribution by the organization amid the pandemic, and there are plans to supply more in the near future.



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The at-home guide points out that sports are intended to be played with friends and in team settings, but the COVID-19 pandemic has temporarily halted all large gatherings. The days of high-fiving teammates and group celebrations will return, but for now, programs like the at-home guide and Sport in a Bag offer a great alternative to remain active individually.

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