



**GOOD  
SPORTS™**

**How to Make  
It Work  
for YOU**

**SONday'SCOOL™**



# How to Make It Work for YOU

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**SONday'SCOOL**  
A World of Difference

# SONday'SCOOL™

## A World of Difference

SONday'SCOOL is Sunday School, but it's not. For one thing, it may not be on Sunday. And it should be as little like school as possible—at least, school in the traditional sense of "Sit down, be quiet, and listen." SONday'SCOOL is active . . . it's alive . . . it's COOL! A How-To Manual is available for each of the following new SONday'SCOOL models. Contact: 1 (800) YOU-CARE (968-2273) or [www.hopeshare.org](http://www.hopeshare.org)



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***Make Hope Happen!***

The mission of **HopeShare** is to intervene in the lives of children at risk, to offer them a safe place where they can learn to feel good about themselves and be good to others, to break the cycle of despair and share the hope of a personal relationship with **Jesus Christ**.

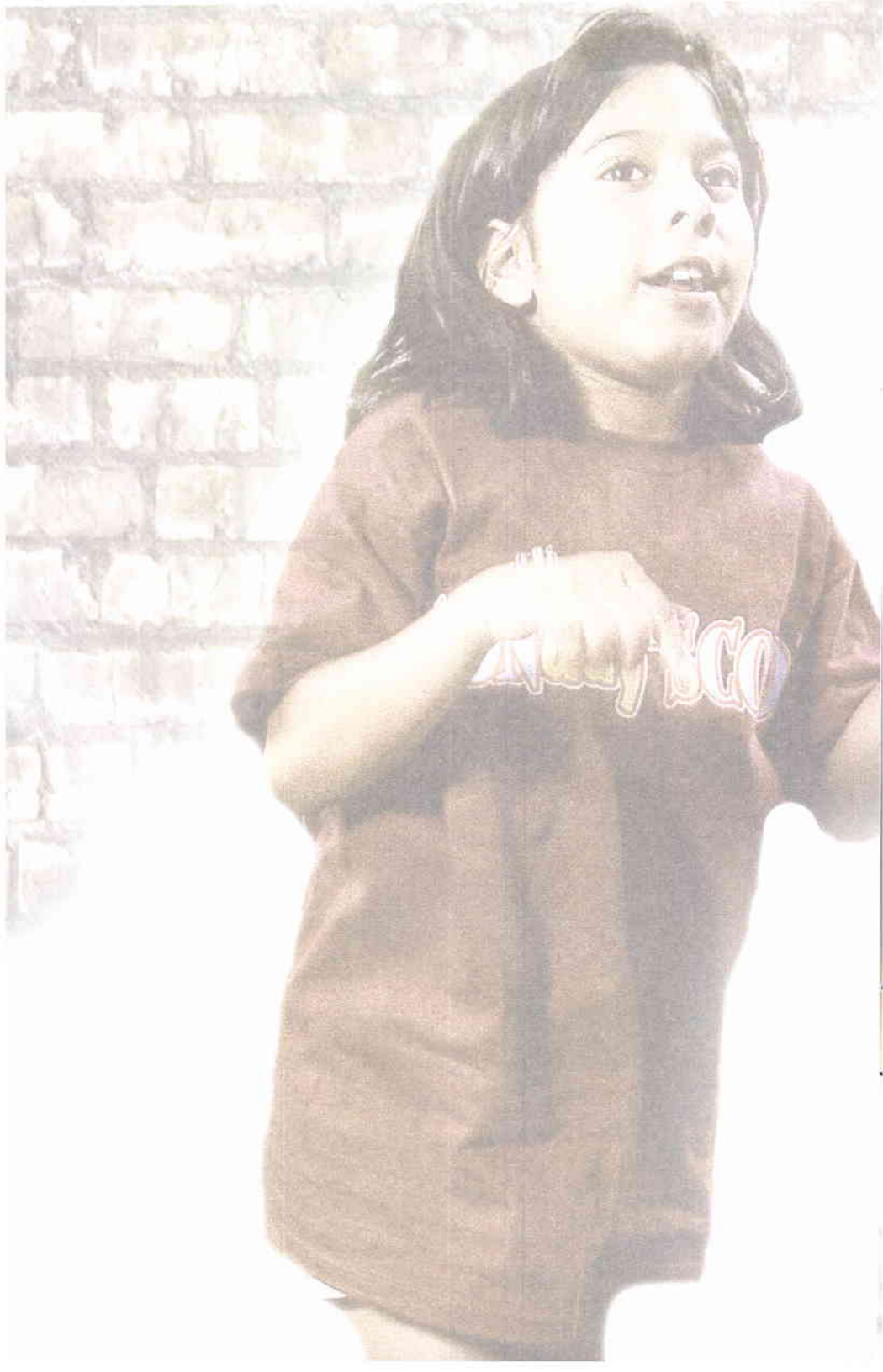
All proceeds and contributions resulting from the sale of this book will go to The Salvation Army's **"HopeChest"** for abused, neglected, and disadvantaged children.

For more information:

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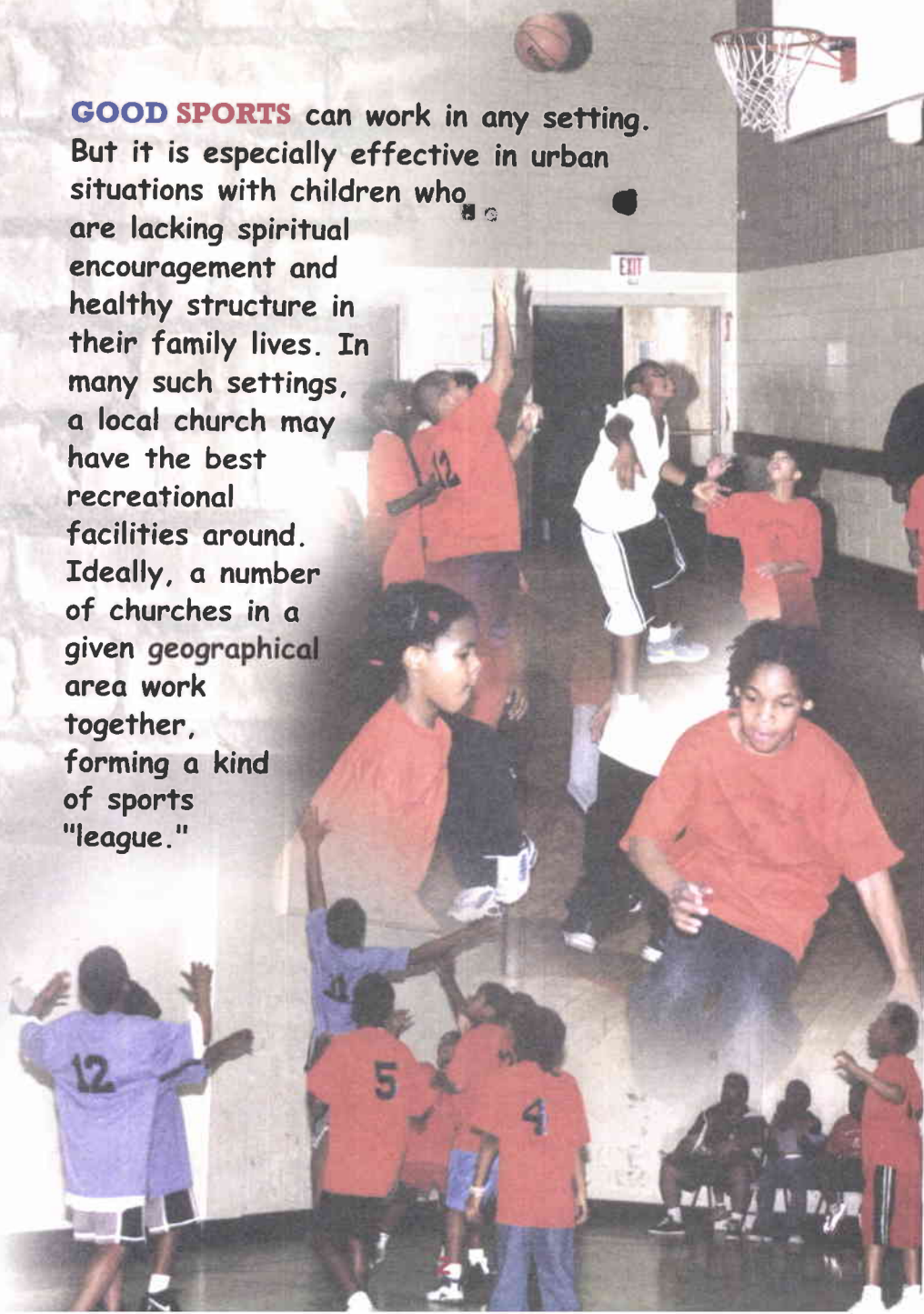


# What's It All About?

**T**he target population for **GOOD SPORTS** is children age 6-13. The objective is to bring these young people closer to God while having fun. Specifically, the program addresses the following goals:

- ♥ To encourage children to attend Sunday School and worship services and learn Bible verses by means of a sports fellowship program.
- ♥ To encourage children to attain good grades in school, which paves the way to future success in life.
- ♥ To teach the basics of teamwork, camaraderie, and responsibility.
- ♥ To keep children off the streets.
- ♥ To develop a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. All of the children play, not just the best athletes.

**GOOD SPORTS** can work in any setting. But it is especially effective in urban situations with children who are lacking spiritual encouragement and healthy structure in their family lives. In many such settings, a local church may have the best recreational facilities around. Ideally, a number of churches in a given geographical area work together, forming a kind of sports "league."



# What's So New About That?

**GOOD SPORTS** is part of an honorable tradition of sharing the gospel on the court or on the playing field. Many churches in many places have been involved in this type of program for many years.

However, **GOOD SPORTS** does have some integral facets that make it unique. The chief difference is that this is a "point-based" program. Playing is allowed only if a child attends Sunday School on Sunday. The child is then awarded points for attending worship services, knowing Bible verses, bringing friends or family members to Sunday School, and community service. The team is awarded points for winning (and losing) games and for perfect attendance. The emphasis is not on sports ability, but on diligence toward God.



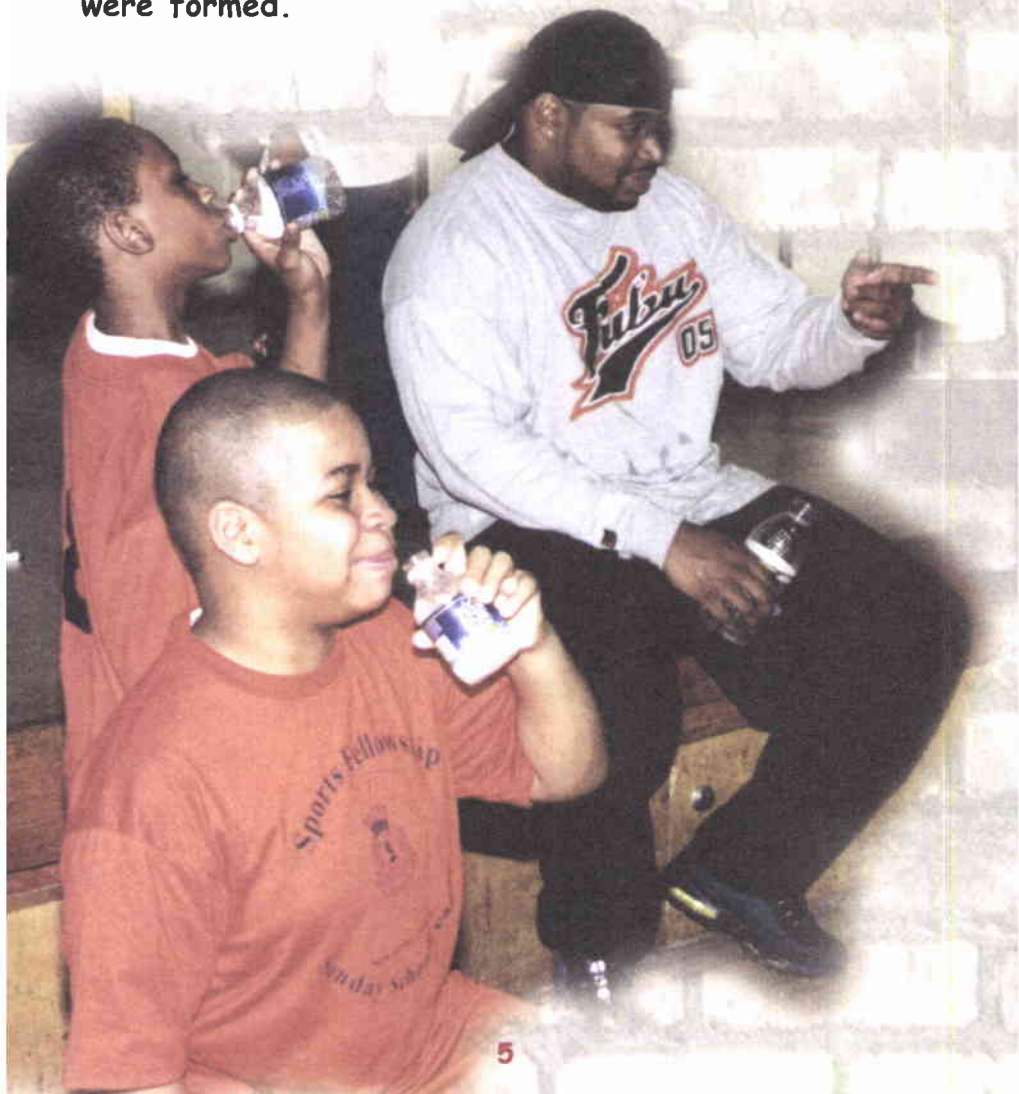
# How Do We Get Started?

**T**he initial planning process took approximately three months. This included designing the overall program, including the point system, as well as disseminating information to participating churches. This time could be shortened if a planning guide was prepared and distributed, including a "how-to" section, forms, and so on. The biggest obstacle faced during this period was arranging meetings around busy schedules.

Here's how the sequence went:

1. Lay out program.
2. Introduce program to prospective participating churches.
3. Determine church interest via survey.
4. Establish game logistics based on interest.
5. Meet with pastors, youth workers, and sponsors.
6. Recruit volunteers as coaches, referees, etc.
7. Develop registration forms, attendance records, point charts, permission slips, team rosters, memory verses, logo.
8. Develop game schedule.
9. Record weekly data (points and Sunday School attendance).
10. Plan and implement an awards banquet.

All Salvation Army churches in the state of New Jersey were invited to participate, and 15 committed to the program—although two dropped out due to a lack of children participating. Ultimately, 19 teams were formed.



# What Facilities/ Equipment Are Needed?



he material requirements for **GOOD SPORTS** will vary, largely depending on the sport to be played.

- ♥ Basketball requires a gymnasium with a full court, basketballs, scoring devices and timers, player uniforms, and referees' whistles.
- ♥ Little League Baseball requires a regulation baseball field, baseballs, bats, gloves, uniforms, scoreboard and timer, and umpires' masks.
- ♥ Soccer requires a field for regulation games, soccer balls, soccer goals, uniforms, protective wear, and referees' equipment.
- ♥ Flag football requires a field, footballs, flag belts, flags, goal posts, uniforms, and referees' equipment.

Sunday School curriculum materials are used, of course, as well as some instructional videos—both Christian and sports-oriented. Additional budgetary considerations for us have included educational field trips for participants, occasional workshops and special guest speakers, and the awards banquet.



# What Staff Will We Need?

**W**hat kinds of people are needed to make **GOOD SPORTS** work? Pastors and church workers who are devoted to the program and its goals; dedicated and loyal volunteers to help at practices and games; people who know the sport being played.

Experience working with children is a must. Gifts of patience, understanding, and devotion are mandatory. And it's important to recruit people who have a talent for making the program fun—from actual game playing to studying Bible verses. That's what will bring the kids in, and keep them in.


Experienced youth pastors and Sunday School teachers make great **GOOD SPORTS** workers. But don't overlook other church members with the right attitude who may have valuable experience to offer.

We used many methods and venues to garner volunteers, including flyers, newspaper ads, an Internet volunteer site, Sunday bulletin announcements, and word of mouth.

It's important to provide professional training for referees, timekeepers, and scorers. Sensitivity training and conflict-resolution training is recommended for everyone involved.



# What Does the Schedule Look Like?

 he children are required to attend Sunday School on Sunday if they want to participate in **GOOD SPORTS**. The pastors, teachers, and volunteers try to make Sunday School a fun experience so the kids will look forward to it. The children are also encouraged to learn their Bible verses, attend worship services, bring friends and family with them, and do community service. Points are recorded for each of these on a weekly basis.

Basketball games are usually played on Friday evenings—although by mutual consent of opposing teams, the day may change. Games start at 5:45 p.m., usually ending at 9:00 p.m. We begin with a short prayer and devotional, then three games are normally played. The teams are allowed to bring cheerleaders, who compete during half-time.

Little League baseball and soccer games are played on other days, but the routine is basically the same.

# What Have the Results Been So Far?

**D**uring the first four months that **GOOD SPORTS** was in operation, we experienced a 60 percent increase in Sunday School attendance at participating churches. There is tremendous excitement regarding this program. Churches are reaching out to their communities and bringing young people into the fold.

We are targeting an 80 percent increase over time. Our dream is that many more of our churches will commit to participation in **GOOD SPORTS**, and that the result will be active engagement with the problems faced by today's young people.



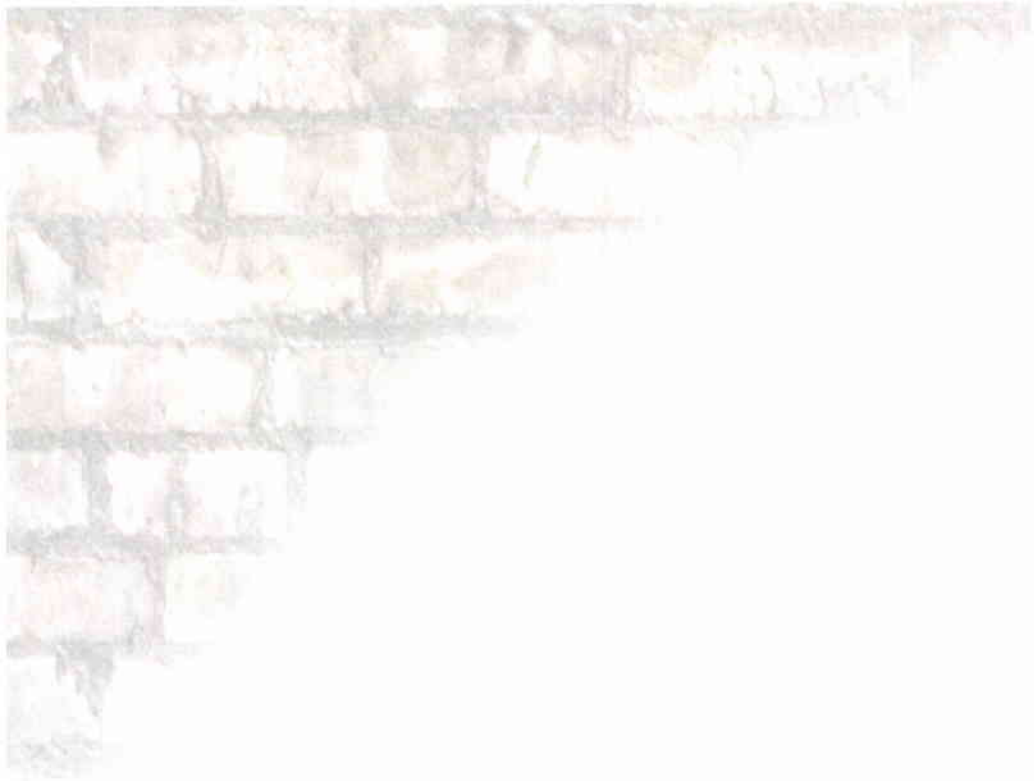
# What Are the Pitfalls to Avoid?

**W**hat do prospective implementers of **GOOD SPORTS** need to watch out for?

- ♥ Participating churches need to be prepared to handle large numbers of children. Kids who hear about the program and join during the season present a special problem. A local church can have more than one team. However, this upsets the game schedule—unless other churches have also created other teams. It can be a logistical nightmare unless rules are set early on. Of course—and here's a nice problem to have!—churches also need to be prepared with adequate space for an expanding Sunday School.
- ♥ You must, in the simplest terms possible, lay out the rules and how points are counted. We initially set down the point rules in a way that seemed very straightforward to us. However, different churches interpreted them differently, and points were not counted the same way. This was eventually resolved. However, in hindsight, we should have explained the rules more simply and directly, showing examples.
- ♥ Once the program has been planned out, it's essential to implement it as planned. Don't succumb to modifications and exceptions asked for to accommodate one or more churches.

- ♥ Another danger is a lack of leadership. With several churches participating, this program must have strong central leadership.
- ♥ We weren't prepared for the fact that so many children would want to be cheerleaders. The point system works perfectly well for them, but we had not provided for further recognition, with awards and trophies. This needs to be planned for.
- ♥ Plan game locations and transportation well in advance.
- ♥ Don't change the system mid-stream. If changes need to be adopted (point categories, for example), make them for the following season. It is disruptive and confusing to make substantive changes during the season.







*Make Hope Happen!*

