

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **OLIVES ACCOMPANY THE CREW FOR WHITE HOUSE HONOR**

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Around 5 AM on Monday, July 13, 7 very excited youth from the Near East Inner City Youth Soccer Program, administered by “Kicks For Kids Worldwide” United Soccer Assoc For Youth, began to gather at Port Columbus to receive final instructions before going on the trip of a life-time. Well-deserving members of the OLIVES youth soccer team were invited guests of the Columbus Crew, professional soccer team and 2008 Major League Soccer (MLS) Champions. In keeping with tradition, one of the most prestigious rewards for achieving MLS champion status is the opportunity to be recognized by the President of the United States, at the White House.

The OLIVES team was represented by Abdi Ali, Abdiaziz Amin, Uriah Anang, Alpha Ousmane Diallo, Ibrahima Diop, Abdoulaye Sow, and Boubacar Thiam. The day’s itinerary and programming were coordinated by Robin Ungerleider, Crew Foundation Community Relations Manager and Program Specialist.

A smooth flight to Baltimore and scenic ride by motor coach to Washington served to heighten everyone’s anticipation of the main event. As the DC skyline came into view, and massive buildings seemed to close in on both sides, the youth could hardly decide which sights to capture with their digital cameras. All the while the motor coach weaved through traffic on its way to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. Then, like scenes from a DC documentary, in the distance appeared the Washington Monument, then the Jefferson Memorial and, finally, the security-

gated public entrance to the White House. As the bus load of well-groomed black-suited men, boys and two female coordinators de-boarded, it was obvious a special delegation had arrived.

Upon clearing White House security the group was taken on an unexpected tour of the East Wing of the White House. The entire place was rich with Presidential history and grandeur and, in the words of the youth, “really cool.” Afterwards, there was time for an outdoor break in a courtyard where regal sounds of the U. S. Marine Corps brass ensemble played. Then it was time to proceed to the Rose Garden for the main event.

Upon official introduction, the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barack Obama, emerged with a hand wave and hearty “Hello, Everybody.” President Obama acknowledged attending Ohio members of Congress: Sen. Sherrod Brown, Rep. Steve Driehaus and Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy, referring to them as soccer fans. With a proud Columbus Crew and officials staged in the background, President Obama congratulated them on winning their first MLS cup, which was on display, and for outstanding community service. President Obama also noted that they were accompanied by the OLIVES youth soccer players, who he pointed to on the first row, while praising them for also having a great soccer year and record of community service. Besides skills training and competitions, the OLIVES have participated in neighborhood clean-up projects, under the direction of coach and mentor Rev. Merv Brereton, as a way of giving back to the community. The Columbus Crew helped kick off the President and Mrs. Obama’s call for all Americans to volunteer in communities this summer as part of the “United We Serve” campaign. Community service highlights appear on the *Serve.org* web site.



Clark Hunt, spokesperson for The Hunt Family and Crew investor-operator, thanked President Obama for the White House invitation and official recognition. He then presented a custom yellow and black Crew jersey bearing the name Obama and number 44 on the back. The President was also given a personally-autographed Crew soccer ball and banner.

Following the White House event, the next stop was Truesdell Elementary School, where the Crew and OLIVES got into gear for a skills clinic that included youth from the D.C. Scores Summer Youth Camp. John Wagner, president of Hunt Sports Group, encouraged the youth to get the most out of soccer training experiences and competitions, which impact physical fitness and health and can lead to great things in life and sports. By the end of the clinic, the youth had witnessed multiple demonstrations, practiced game techniques, and asked a field of questions before receiving their own personally-autographed soccer balls from the Crew.

Sornatha Fulford, organizational consultant and program volunteer, accompanied the OLIVES on the trip. She remarked, “Rev. Brereton’s passion for soccer and the incredible amount of time and resources he invests in mentoring the youth are what impressed me most.

President Obama's recognition of the youth was a tremendous honor, and I believe the sky is the limit for where this program will go."

Rev. Merv Brereton, a retired national soccer player, is the founder, director and senior coach for "Kicks For Kids Worldwide" United Soccer Assoc For Youth, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. For more program information contact 614-258-HELP (4357), 614-447-CREW (2739), or email: [coach@k4kwusa.org](mailto:coach@k4kwusa.org).

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