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Chicago Kickers score

Pro team kicks in for soccer fields

May 7, 2008 By [JIM NEWTON](#) jnewton@scn1.com

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The marriage of the Chicago Kicker Soccer Club with the Lake Villa-based American Aid Society is proving a benefit to both groups, as well as the surrounding community.

Two spacious new soccer fields were completed in 2003 on the historic site of the American Aid Society of German Descent on Grand Avenue, helping the Chicago Kickers to provide organized team play for 350 players of all ages.

The non-profit soccer club also runs an instructional soccer academy, open to the public, for kids from 3 to 8 years old.

"Each year we've added teams and we now have 23 teams from 8-year-olds to adults in their 30s," said Terry Beadle, a coordinator of facilities for the soccer club, who also serves on the Lake Villa School District Board and the Lake Villa Township Board.

Beadle said the Chicago Kickers helps financially with area field development, including a donation toward the new township soccer complex being constructed on Route 59.

Former professional soccer player Tom Soehn, a past assistant coach with the Chicago Fire and current coach of the D.C. United, helped establish the Chicago Kickers presence in Lake Villa and Chicago Fire players still serve as trainers for the local club.

The group keeps international ties alive as well. The Chicago Kickers recently hosted a game against a youth team from Mantova, Italy.

The Kickers collaboration with the American Aid Society goes back quite a ways. The Chicago Kickers started in Chicago in 1933 as a soccer organization of German immigrants who came to America.

In 1955, the Kickers joined with American Aid Society's Club in Irving Park. In the early 1980s, that clubhouse was sold and the soccer club bounced around to a few locations before ending up at its Lake Villa location.

The American Aid Society in Lake Villa, which currently has about 750 members, boasts some history of its own. It operates a cultural center/museum featuring relics from immigrants of German descent reaching back to the 1800s.

The group also hosts several annual events for its members including a Memorial Day service, a Mother's Day banquet and, of course, Oktoberfest festivities, held authentically on the last three days of September.

The group's president, Joe Stein, a retired history teacher, spent two years in a communist concentration camp in Yugoslavia beginning when he was eight years old. He immigrated to the United States with his family in 1951.

He said the Aid Society was initially formed to help displaced Germans in Southeast Europe come to America. It remains a non-profit charitable organization.

"We send checks to people in need. Any kind of disaster," Stein said. "We still have Germans who live in Hungary and Yugoslavia that we help out."

Although the club's membership was initially made up of those of European German descent, Stein said it is open to all.

"Anyone interested in German culture can join," he said.

Stein said through youth activities such as dance and soccer clubs, the American Aid Society gains the younger members it needs to keep going.

"We have a lot of young people in the club. They're all third generation already," he said.