

Jorge



Jorge is the toughest 10 year old in his neighborhood. At least he thinks he is. His hair is spiked and his temper sometimes gets the best of him. But his good looks and soft charm makes him irresistible to the other kids and adults know him. He likes the attention and loves to stand out. This much is obvious.

Coming home from school late one fall afternoon, Jorge is walking towards his apartment to take part in his usual routine: hanging out with friends, riding his bike, or getting into mischief. His parents often work late so he has the freedom to do what he wants.

As the sun casts a warm glow over the terracotta adobe walls of Sunset Gardens, the Bienestar apartment complex where he lives, Jorge passes the small dusty soccer field where a group of kids his age are lined up taking penalty kicks on net. Not one to be left out, especially when it comes to soccer, he quickly runs home, grabs his cleats, and jumps in line. He can't resist the opportunity to show off his skills and prove to the other kids who's the best soccer player in

the neighborhood.

Bienestar Soccer Club is just getting underway with the first weekly practice of the ten week program. In this warm-up drill, whoever scores a penalty kick gets a chance to play goalie, a privilege among these kids who love denying the others the same opportunity. After his first kick, and first goal, Jorge is in net. However, it's not long until another player gets the best of him and scores a goal. With a dusty shirt and red checks, Jorge quickly confronts the kicker, Jose, who took his penalty kick a little too close and little too fast.

“Cheater”! Screams Jorge. Who hurls the ball back in retaliation, hitting Jose, the offending party.

The confrontation quickly escalates, and both children are told to leave soccer club, due to their poor sportsmanship and a few select Spanish words they try to slip by the soccer club volunteer who is standing nearby.

The following week, both boys are back at soccer club. After a reminder from the coach that soccer club is a privilege and everyone is expected to get along, Jorge and Jose make it through the session without incident. In fact, Jorge and Jose, two kids who aren't known for their avoidance of trouble, managed to behave all week long in Homework Club and other Bienestar

programs that they participate in. They didn't want to risk missing out on another soccer club session for the second week in a row.

Of course, Jorge behavior isn't always perfect, but Soccer club has helped Jorge control his temper by providing an incentive to behave. Where he used to act first before thinking, Jorge began getting his emotions under control and keeping out of trouble in all Bienestar programs. Jorge's grades have since improved, and he has participated in more programs like Explorador summer camp, Homework Club, AKA Science, and Summer Lunch and Fun activities as he was no longer is asked to leave because off fights or running off his mouth.

Jorge and his parent's live in Sunset Gardens, an affordable housing complex in Hillsboro where the average family earns less than \$20,000, less than the federal poverty level, and 98% of families are Latino. Most families are hard working but yet still struggle to pay the bills and put food on their tables. Bienestar youth programs like soccer club, music, and art classes help the children of these families participate in life enriching programs at a young age, at no cost and onsite, directly in their own neighborhood which removes barriers that wealthier children typically don't have to worry about.

Eventually Jorge was recognized for the soccer skills that Bienestar Soccer Club helped him develop. He tried out for an elite local soccer program and made the team. Due to the fact he is eligible for free lunch at school, he was able to apply for a received a scholarship to cover the cost of this program.

Jorge is not a unique case at Bienestar. Every day, Bienestar works with low-income Latino children of farm workers and other working poor families from birth through college to help them realize their potential and achieve their goals.