

## Presentation by Lin Sue Cooney KPNX, Channel 12 News Anchor

KIDS SPORTS STARS Donor Reception  
Molina Fine Jewelers, January 17, 2007

I have served on the **Kids Sports Stars** Advisory Board for three years now...because I believe in their mission. There are so many worthy causes that help children in our community ....it's impossible to get involved with all of them. But **Kids Sports Stars** is special. They are passionate and they get results.

I agree one hundred percent with their philosophy of "motivating and educating kids to embrace active healthy lifestyles through the power of sports and fitness". What's going to make someone stick to a new way of life that involves exercise and diet? Fun. Sports are fun. They energize and invigorate....not only the body but the mind. Sports can work magic in a child's life. We've seen it.

Channel 12 has sent cameras out to **Kids Sports Stars** events....and you can read it in the children's faces....in the sparkle in their eyes and the triumphant smiles on their lips. They feel so much better about themselves.

This is an organization that is business based....and one that takes a results-oriented approach. They want to make a difference in these kid's lives. So many groups hold events to raise funding and there is no accountability. **Kids Sports Stars** partners with schools to reach the kids who need this program...and then they evaluate what they accomplish...so there is a way to measure effectiveness and change in the kids.

And while we're talking about measuring....one of the most critical problems facing society right now...is childhood obesity. One in three kids, ages 6 to 19 is overweight, doesn't exercise properly or enough, doesn't eat right, or have any motivation at home to become physically fit.

That means they are at risk for major health problems like diabetes and heart disease and we will all pay for that with higher insurance premiums for generations to come, unless we adults take charge and help children who do not know better...how to change. They can be educated and they can understand, and once they make a change they break the cycle.

Being overweight at a young age is devastating. It causes a lot of unnecessary suffering. These kids are shunned and ridiculed...leading to lower self-esteem. And when children don't think much of themselves....don't even like themselves...they are more likely to act out....in order to fit in. They are not able to handle the temptations and challenges of life. They are more likely to fail in many areas of their lives.

**Kids Sports Stars** wants to impact this generation of kids who, without help, could be the first to have a shorter lifespan than their parents.

Even if your own children are not overweight, as a society, we will all suffer. There is already an increase stress on our healthcare system and on society, which has to cover the costs linked to weight-related illnesses.

Each of us can make an impact on the children in our own lives...but by supporting **Kids Sports Stars**; we can help many more children. We have an opportunity to prevent problems before they become a reality. If we can prevent obese children, we won't have obese adults.

Research shows there is a definite connection between physical activity and several factors like:

- living longer with less disease
- higher confidence and self esteem
- better academic performance
- stronger social skills
- more ability to cope with stress
- strength to resist peer pressure and establish a set of values and morals which helps kids be better prepared to handle the challenges of life

And we all know that life is a lot more challenging these days, than when we were kids. I don't know how children are able to make sense of the world with all the temptations and pressures put upon them. But, they are better equipped when they have an outlet in physical activity, have confidence to resist bad influences and feel like they are knowledgeable about what's healthy and smart enough to embrace that knowledge. Then they are empowered and have control over themselves and that gives them the confidence to succeed in all areas of life.

The magic of sports is a hard thing to explain. But because it's tied to personal accomplishment, it unlocks a part of every child. About a year and a half ago, we adopted a little boy from China. He was barely three when we got him; now he's four and a half. You wouldn't recognize him. In the beginning, as to be expected, he was shy and afraid to trust. But nothing that love couldn't conquer. After he figured out he had a family that would love him forever, that is when phase two started. And I give a lot of the credit for that part of his development to sports. We held him in the swimming pool, because he would scream bloody murder. But pools are a reality in Phoenix and we wanted him to know how to swim. Once he learned that ski., he was a little fish. And you could just see his confidence swell. We couldn't keep him out of the water this past summer and he can't wait for the weather to get warm again so he can jump off the diving board on the deep end and swim to the side. Then came tee ball. Despite being born with a right arm that ends just a few inches below the elbow, he can swing a bat and make perfect contact with the ball every time. He's got great aim and never misses. His ability is inspiring to the other kids on this team. And because he's able to be a contributing member, he feels great about himself. He has a can-do attitude. That's the beauty of sports.

And we finished out last year with soccer, where he truly excels because the whole point is not to use your hands. He had to learn balance early being asymmetrical growing up, so he's quick on his feet and an incredible kicker. He ended up being the best kid on the team and none of the coaches could not believe he'd never even seen a soccer ball before the first practice.

Such a difference in a child who was once afraid to make eye contact! And this is a boy who has a loving supportive environment to grow up in. Sports could be a true life-saver for a child who has very little going for him....a child who at such a young age has already learned to hate himself because he's not skinny like the other kids.

All the pep talks in the world about loving yourself for what's on the inside, not the outside, aren't going to make his life better. He needs to make his life better. Physical activity and learning a new way of life that teaches better decision making about nutrition and self control will lead to lifelong changes that no one can take away from him. That kind of self-esteem is developed here and sports is the key to that new lifestyle. And it will work every time because it's fun. And, what child can resist fun?

And again, I would just like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for coming here tonight and hope you can help this wonderful program.