

Framingham Kids Get Soccer Time with Italian Coaches

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Children play in the Mary Dennison Park field in Framingham during a weeklong soccer clinic. [Daily News Photo/Cesareo Contreras]

FRAMINGHAM - If you're driving by Mary Dennison Park during the next couple of days, it would be difficult to not notice the neon orange speckled throughout the field.

This week, in collaboration with the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, Alira Health, a healthcare management consulting firm in Framingham, is hosting a week-long soccer camp for children who are a part of summer programs offered by SMOC and Framingham Suburban Child.

Dressed in neon orange jerseys, kids arrive at the field at 9 a.m. and practice lasts until 4 p.m. Between soccer drills, children have lunch - during Tuesday's practice, the kids were given sandwiches with chips. They end the day by dividing the kids into teams and scrimmaging.

The soccer clinic, open to children ages 5 to 11, was the brainchild of Alira's CEO Gabriele Brambilla.

When Brambilla moved the company's operations from Europe to the United States about a year ago, he started exploring the idea of giving back to the local community, something the company often did in Europe.

Brambilla contacted SMOC Executive Director Jim Cuddy and pitched the idea of opening a soccer clinic for kids who use the agency's services.

"This is something that the kids who are in our program would not have the opportunity to experience," said Cuddy. "It's just a really good thing on so many different levels."

Alira Health funds the entirety of the clinic's expenses, which includes water bottles, soccer balls and the neon orange jerseys. Alira Health also flew over two of Brambilla's Italian soccer mates - Paolo Taddei and Pierpaolo Tugliola - who played and coached in leagues in Italy.

"I just wanted to make it more fun for the kids," Brambilla said.

Daisy Moran, a SMOC staffer, said the clinic is great because it may "awaken" children's interest in soccer.

John Barrett, swimming director at Framingham Suburban Child, said, "I think it's wonderful. Any chance the kids get to play and get instructions along the way is awesome. So many kids don't have the opportunity to get exposed to this stuff."