



# SETTING GOAAAALLLLLLSSSSSSSSSS!!!

*Soccer Shots has ambitious plans to build on its already successful model for youth sports.*

BY RACHEL JENKINS



In 1962, President John F. Kennedy boldly proclaimed the nation’s goal of landing a man on the moon. Seven years later, America made it happen.

In 2017, Soccer Shots used Kennedy’s speech for its own inspiration.

“Our ‘we choose to go to the moon’ moment was when we said that, in five years, we want to serve a million unique children in a calendar year,” said Chief Executive Officer Justin Bredeman. “And we want to do that in the year 2022.”

Soccer Shots is an athletic program for children ages 2 through 8, designed to introduce them to basic soccer skills and character development. Though its roots are deeply embedded in local

turf, this company currently operates 192 franchises across 36 states and Canada.

Currently, Soccer Shots serves around 250,000 to 300,000 children a year. In order to reach 1 million by 2022, they’ll need to double their current numbers, and then double them again. But, for those at Soccer Shots, this is one goal they’re determined to score.

The initial idea of Soccer Shots, born by Messiah College graduates Jason Webb and Jeremy Sorzano, was to fill a void in athletic education for young children.

Webb, now the vice president of strategic partnerships, and Sorzano began their venture as a side hustle to make some money and engage young kids in a sport that they love.

“It’s everybody’s game, but it’s always been a great game for little kids to start with,” Webb said. “And kids as young as age 2 or 3 can do soccer. We were really the first organization to professionalize and package our program, and we put it together and scaled it.”

Webb and Sorzano pitched their program to local daycares and, to their surprise, found immediate success. The pair began to dive in deep, developing their simple idea into an organization that was, at the time, completely original.

“It was something that wasn’t being done,” Webb said. “We discovered that it could be done, and it worked. And parents loved it and wanted it and kids did too.”



Concurrently, they continued to play soccer professionally for North Carolina's Charlotte Eagles. Eventually, Sorzano stayed to run the program in North Carolina and Webb moved back to central Pennsylvania to play for the Harrisburg Heat. It was at this time that Harrisburg became home to Soccer Shots headquarters—otherwise known as Webb's kitchen counter.

Fast-forward to 2005, and Soccer Shots made its first headshot into the world of franchising. It was then that Bredeman, college teammate and friend to Webb and Sorzano, brought his franchising background to the business as Soccer Shots expanded its reach to Cleveland, Philadelphia, Lancaster and Miami.

Through its immense growth over the past two decades—growth that recently led the company to build a new, 16,000-square-foot headquarters just outside Harrisburg—Soccer Shots has evolved, systemized and improved the curriculum taught by coaches. But through it all, the founders have remained firm in their belief that sports should be a foundation for positive character development.

Amongst drills, passes and kicks, the Soccer Shots curriculum is built to encourage personal growth, emphasizing ideals like respect, sportsmanship and courage.

"You don't have to be all grown up to learn what's right and what's wrong or what it means to demonstrate and live out good character," Webb said.

And, in an effort to practice what they preach, Soccer Shots began to partner with the U.S. Soccer Foundation in 2010 to give back to underserved communities and families that may not be able to afford such programs.

Bredeman acknowledges that Soccer Shots serves primarily middle- to upper-middle-class families. But, because the partners understand the importance that sports has on the physical and mental growth of a child, they're committed to sponsoring events hosted by the U.S. Soccer Foundation, as well as supporting soccer pitches constructed through the program "Safe Places to Play."

As the company works toward a lofty goal of serving 1 million children, Bredeman said they're staying focused on Soccer Shots' vision statement: "To provide a beloved growth experience for every child, a remarkable experience for every family."

Taking those words to heart, Soccer Shots is looking to achieve its goal in both quantity and quality.

"We need to have as many children as we can to have a positive experience, but it can't be at the expense of a depth of experience," Bredeman said. "But I truly believe that, if you do sport right, there is no reason why every kid shouldn't have a positive experience with sport." **B**

*For more information about Soccer Shots, visit [www.soccershots.org](http://www.soccershots.org).*

*Photos courtesy of Soccer Shots*



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