

Anay Bhatt's Soccer4Smiles Removes Financial Barriers to Youth Soccer in the United States and Spain

LIVINGSTON, NJ, UNITED STATES, July 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [In 2023, approximately 27.3 million children across the United States](#) participated in organized sports, representing about 55.4% of children nationwide. Anay Bhatt had already been part of that world for nearly his entire life, first stepping onto a soccer field after his parents enrolled him in the sport at just two years old. His father regularly took him to games, talked with him about soccer, and shared a love for the sport that Bhatt could only describe as contagious. Over time, soccer became more than something they enjoyed together, gradually growing into one of the most meaningful parts of Bhatt's life.

After the passing of his father in 2019, Bhatt's connection to soccer took on an even deeper meaning. The soccer field became a place for Bhatt to process his grief, clear his mind, and find joy during an incredibly difficult time. On the field, Bhatt was able to feel like himself no matter the

circumstance and wanted other kids to experience a similar positive outlet. However, as he grew older, Bhatt became more aware that many children may never receive the same opportunity. He learned that equipment costs, program fees, and limited access can prevent children and their families from getting involved and joining teams at any age. After reflecting on everything the game had given him, Bhatt founded a nonprofit, Soccer4Smiles, in 2023 to create safe, welcoming spaces for children to play with their peers, build friendships, learn teamwork, and experience the sense of belonging he found through soccer, regardless of their financial circumstances.

For Bhatt, the mission behind Soccer4Smiles is rooted in the belief that soccer is more than a sport and that every child deserves the chance to experience the emotional and social impact the game can have. "Soccer became my happy place and helped me through one of the hardest



Anay Bhatt

times in my life,” Bhatt shared. “Around the world, soccer is often called the universal language because it brings people together regardless of culture, background, or income. Yet millions of children still face financial and social barriers that prevent them from participating. Soccer4Smiles exists to change that by expanding access to the sport.”

To bring Soccer4Smiles to life, Bhatt researched community needs, built a digital presence, and created outreach efforts designed to raise awareness and invite others into the movement. The organization has grown through donations, sponsorships, and fundraising events with local businesses, soccer facilities, and community supporters, including Excellent Soccer Touch, SoFive, and Livingston area partners such as Assado, Lithos Estiatorio, PurePsych, Sweet Kneads, Turano’s Pizza Kitchen, and Sacks Orthodontics.

As Soccer4Smiles expanded, Bhatt brought together a leadership team to contribute growth towards the organization’s outreach, fundraising, branding, volunteer coordination, and event efforts. The team includes Ryan D’Souza as Chief Marketing Officer, Advay Chamoli as Chief Financial Officer, Brandon Muser as Chief Fundraising Officer, and Aanav Lakhani and Atharv Chamoli as Recruitment Directors. High school students have also volunteered at tournaments, helping organize events and refereeing games within the organization’s tournament bracket.

Shortly after launching Soccer4Smiles in ninth grade, Bhatt moved from New Jersey in the United States to Barcelona, Spain, an experience that broadened his understanding of what access to the universally loved game can look like when soccer is deeply woven into everyday culture and



Anay Bhatt playing soccer



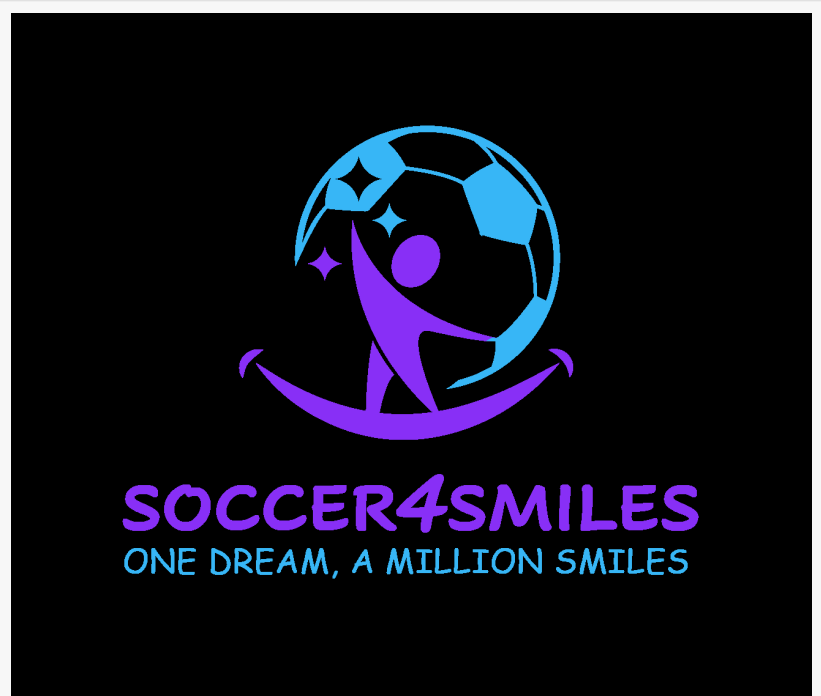
Anay Bhatt and his father

community life. In Spain, Bhatt saw firsthand how accessible youth soccer can be when it is part of the community, giving children a place to build friendships, support their mental well being, and feel a sense of belonging.

Rather than changing his original mission to partner with larger organizations in the United States, the move strengthened it. Bhatt began thinking not only about how to reduce financial barriers to the sport, but also about how the sport could support children's physical health and personal development. His experience playing competitively in both the United States and Spain, including with Premier Barcelona, has allowed him to better understand different youth soccer systems and bring those perspectives into Soccer4Smiles.

Since launching Soccer4Smiles, Bhatt has organized three community soccer tournaments serving more than 120 children. The tournaments have brought together young athletes and their families alongside student volunteers, coaches, local businesses, and community organizations, turning each event into a larger community effort built around the belief that every child deserves the chance to play. Soccer4Smiles has also earned local recognition through a feature in The Livingston Tribune, further highlighting Bhatt's mission to make the game more accessible.

What makes Soccer4Smiles different is its focus on the child before the athlete. While many organizations are centered on developing soccer skills, Bhatt's goal is to help children develop as people by creating experiences that leave them feeling supported in addition to developing their skillsets. When speaking on the impact of Soccer4Smiles, Bhatt said, "Watching children smile, gain confidence, and discover a place where they belong reminds me why this movement



Soccer4Smiles logo



Team participating in the Soccer4Smiles tournament

matters. I've learned that soccer is about much more than winning games. It is about creating opportunities, building character, and giving children hope for the future."

Bhatt plans to continue growing Soccer4Smiles beyond its beginnings by expanding partnerships, reaching new communities, and inspiring others to join a global movement that makes the world's game more accessible to every child. To learn more, support Soccer4Smiles, or share the organization with families, schools, coaches, and young athletes who may benefit from its mission, [visit soccer4smiles.org](https://www.soccer4smiles.org) and [@soccer4smiles on Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/soccer4smiles).

About Anay Bhatt

Anay Bhatt is a student in the International Baccalaureate Programme at the American School of Barcelona in Barcelona, Spain. He is a member of the National Honor Society and his school's Model United Nations, where he continues developing his interests in diplomacy, public speaking, and global policy. Bhatt has also been involved with the Young Men's Service League, participating in community service projects, mentoring students with special needs, and supporting efforts to create more inclusive environments. He plays competitive soccer in both the United States and Spain. His commitment to service also extends internationally, as he is currently helping build water conservation systems in Peruvian villages.

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