
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

Teach a Kid to Teach Deadlifts

Nick Loera wanted to bring CrossFit to fellow students at Summit Tahoma. Through the help of the NorCal CrossFit community, he'll be teaching his peers to squat in February.

By Laura Bruner

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Bill Chiochi

Nick Loera (left) trains in the NorCal CrossFit Teens Program led by Samantha Aochi (right), and he wanted to share CrossFit with his schoolmates.

Summit Charter High Schools are based on a philosophy that students should drive their own learning, and 16-year-old Nick Loera took that to heart.

While Summit has a strong approach to developing learning and critical thinking in the classroom, the students lack any form of physical education.

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After experiencing for himself the physical and mental benefits of CrossFit, Loera built up the courage to approach his school administration at Summit Tahoma in San Jose, Calif., to make a change.

"CrossFit has changed my life in so many ways," he said. "I think better, have more confidence and know what it means to be healthy. So many of the kids at my school don't have that."

**"CrossFit has changed my life
in so many ways."**

—Nick Loera

Loera spent countless hours developing detailed proposals to convince the administration to approve an after-school CrossFit program. He won his battle, but the financial burden of providing equipment and coaches required some help from the CrossFit community.

Books and Burpees

In 2000, a group of parents from Silicon Valley asked, "What happened to the American public high school, and what can we do to fix it?"

The answer to this question came in the form of a series of Bay Area Summit Public High Schools, developed by parents, with an innovative approach to education that has already positively affected kids all over Silicon Valley. The schools encourage students to take ownership of their education, and the teachers encourage critical thinking and deeper learning through experience to support every student's individual needs. The administration describes this as "high-impact teaching."



Ali Samieivafa

CrossFit affiliates have a long tradition of supporting worthy causes, and NorCal CrossFit jumped at the chance to raise money to purchase gear for Loera's new program.



Brad Haines

If you're going to work out anyway, you might as well work out to support a great cause.

The emphasis has always been on academics during the school day, and while this has paid off with college acceptance rates of 96 percent, physical education has gotten lost. Summit is a public school but is funded in the same way as a charter institution.

"All funding and energy goes into academics, but all students are expected to log at least 100 hours of outside physical fitness on their own," said Rolando Loera, Nick's father and a board member at Summit.

While members of the administration understand the importance of fitness and activity, there is no physical education because time and funds are limited.

After Nick received approval for a CrossFit program, he got creative in finding a way to fund it. As a member of the NorCal CrossFit Teens Program, led by coach Samantha Aochi, Loera came to NorCal with an idea and faith that his community could make his dream a reality. NorCal CrossFit is a group of affiliates in Northern California, with one box located in San Jose. The NorCal community has



Brad Haines

Jason Khalipa (left) and Jonji Barber of NorCal CrossFit were inspired to help Loera because they've seen what fitness can do for children.

come together for many causes in the past, including the Hope for Kenya project in which the affiliate raised enough money to build two schools in Kenya. A fundraising initiative to support one of their own really engaged affiliate members.

NorCal coach Jonji Barber, who led the efforts for the fundraising event, was inspired by Loera's work and the initiative of the students at Summit.

"When Nick came to us in hopes of fundraising to start a CrossFit at his school, I knew we had found the perfect cause for our community to get behind," Barber said. "From NorCal's perspective, it made sense to try to foster fitness in our community, and what better way to achieve this than an on-campus gym at a local high school?"

And the cause hit home for Barber on a personal level.

"I felt connected to the cause because I was first introduced to CrossFit in the classes (former CrossFit Inc. media director) Tony Budding taught at my high school back in

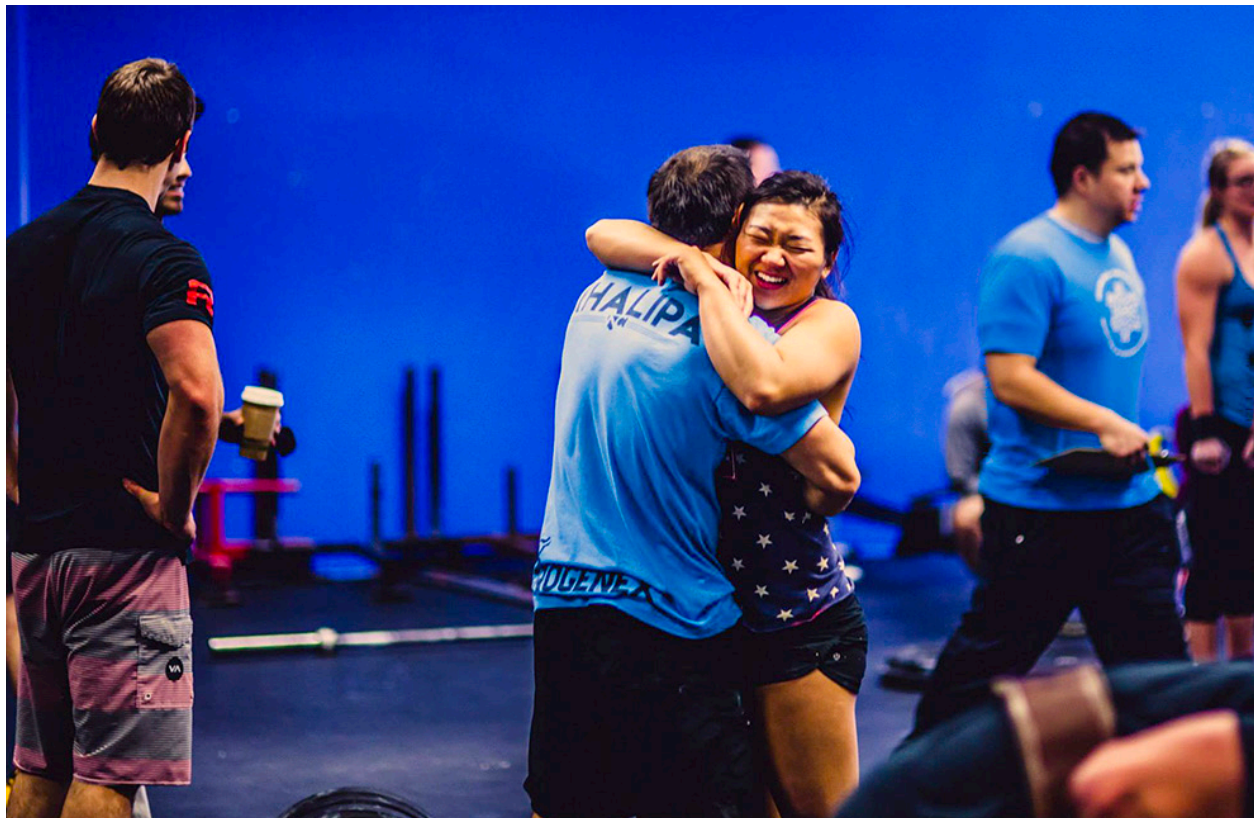
2004," he said. "The lessons we learned in his classes—elegance, virtuosity, the pursuit of excellence—became the guiding principles of my life and have served me in every facet since."

Aochi said the project has been good for the community.

"How can we expect to send these kids into the world and adulthood without any preparation on how to take care of themselves? If there's a want, there needs to be a how," Aochi said. "If these kids want to be stronger and healthier and participate in CrossFit, I feel it's our duty as a community to figure out how we can do that."

Coming Together

On Jan. 4, NorCal CrossFit rang in the New Year with a competition in which the focus was less about the athletes and all about the kids. There were twice as many scaled teams as teams moving the prescribed loads, showing the all-inclusive nature of the event. In fact, almost a third of the competitors had never competed before.



Ali Samieivafa

The power of athletics was on full display at the NorCal CrossFit fundraiser, which included many first-time competitors.



Ali Samiei/vafa

Children who learn to love fitness early in life will be unlikely to park in front of the TV for hours on end while eating poorly as adults.

Teams competed in at least three workouts, with the top teams doing one more. Each athlete had a fundraising target of US\$50 or more, and everyone hit that goal by raising funds through friends and family or contributing themselves. A raffle brought in additional funds, for a total of \$6,500. The money will be spent on equipment for the Summit Tahoma program.

"When I heard these kids didn't have any sort of physical education or recreational sports, I thought, 'That's crazy!'" competitor Danny Nguyen said. "Sports played a huge role in my life and helped keep me out of trouble. There is so much to learn socially by participating in organized games, and what better organized game than CrossFit?"

Jason Khalipa, six-time CrossFit Games athlete and owner of NorCal CrossFit, is fully behind the cause.

"I can't imagine a school without any physical activities," Khalipa said. "Video games and TV are taking place of the soccer field and gym. If we can help children get up and move more, our goal has been accomplished."

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—Jason Khalipa

With funds for equipment in place, Summit Tahoma will have a fully functioning CrossFit after-school program by the end of February.

"NorCal won't be paying for coaches for the school because we want it to be self-sustaining," Khalipa said.

The plan, instead, is to help Loera attend a CrossFit Level 1 Seminar so he can coach—a plan very much in line with Summit's commitment to empowering students to take charge of their education. NorCal CrossFit plans to donate



Bill Chiochi

More and more schools are learning what CrossFit affiliates already know: programs for kids have incredible benefits on both bodies and minds.



Bill Chiochi

a spot for him at the next seminar it hosts. Under the supervision of faculty members Zachary Drew and Eileen Kim, Loera will take the role of CrossFit coach as he shares his knowledge with his schoolmates.

"He has put in the work and shown his passion for CrossFit. He will do a great job," Khalipa said.

No one is more excited than Loera.

"I am extremely excited to take the L1 so I can become a coach. I know I have what it takes to be an instructor for my peers," he said.



About the Author

Laura Bruner works for CrossFit Inc. to bring CrossFit and education together through her interaction with schools, teachers, administrators and affiliates. She also is a trainer on CrossFit's Level 1 Seminar Staff and a coach at NorCal CrossFit in San Jose, Calif. Email Laura@CrossFit.com with questions or thoughts about CrossFit and education.