
THE CrossFit JOURNAL

One Kid at a Time

Steve Liberati and Lee Knight explain how you can use the Steve's Club National Program to bring fitness to kids in your area.

By Steve Liberati with Lee Knight

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All images courtesy of Steve's Club

I work less than a mile from Camden—often touted as the most dangerous city in the country.

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Due to New Jersey's budget cuts, Camden's police department was recently slashed in half. Drug dealers are celebrating. Gang leaders are recruiting. There is blood in the streets.

Our 3,000-square-foot facility is a safe haven from these dangers and home to four sister companies that work together to offer elite fitness and nutrition to those seeking refuge, stress relief and a healthier way of life. CrossFit Tribe and Steve's Original are how I make my living. Steve's Club and the new Steve's Club National Program are how I live my life.

A Change in Direction

Less than four years ago while working for my family pest-control business, I traveled to Camden daily. I spent much time talking to young souls I met in apartments and on the streets, stuck in conditions they never asked for. Many were trying to control pests much bigger than roaches and rats. I wanted to carry each one out of hell and show each a different way. I was constantly plagued with one thought: "Could these children change their future if someone gave them a chance?"

I grabbed my chance and unknowingly changed my own future by inviting one of these Camden kids to work out. Being a recent CrossFit convert and trainer, I was eager to share the Kool-Aid with anyone who would sip, and I was even more eager to use this discipline to change lives.

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Before long I had 10, 15, 20 kids joining my little after-school club. We did WODs outside with equipment I purchased or made and hauled around in the back of my work truck. When it got cold, we shared space with non-profit groups including the local Police Athletic League. We bounced around until it was clear that we needed dedicated space, better equipment and money to train more kids. It wasn't a question of who needed help; it was more like, "How are we going to help all the kids in need?"



Kids looking to escape the streets are warmly welcomed by Steve Liberati.

I made the decision to leave the pest-control business and open a CrossFit affiliate. Having paying customers would allow me to get the space and equipment I needed to properly train the kids. Steve's Club Camden received an official 501c3 not-for-profit status late in 2007. CrossFit Tribe opened in early 2008 and is now 75 members strong and growing.

The adults from CrossFit Tribe often tease me that training them is the way I fund my "little habit" of mentoring kids from Camden—that I live for 4 o'clock, when my gym is filled with gifted unknown athletes who smell like teen spirit. I don't confirm or deny this allegation, but I can say that many Tribers volunteer their time with Steve's Clubbers, mentoring, coaching and competing. It seems as if they have developed a wonderful little habit of their own to help support our program through their involvement and by purchasing PaleoKits, PaleoKrunch and other Steve's Original products.

Steve's Original is the food company we created to offer delicious Paleo food packaged for people on the go. Another offshoot of Steve's Club, the products for Steve's Original were born almost by accident. Looking for healthy options to send to school with Steve's Clubbers, my wife Kristen and I vacuum-packed beef jerky, nuts and dried fruit, and our flagship product was born. We called them PaleoKits, and the kids ate them as fast as we could make them. We started selling them in our gym to fund Steve's Club and later took them online to share the Paleo goodness with the rest of the community.

Three years later, we have 15 Steve's Original products, including PaleoStix, PaleoKrunch, Just Jerky and Coconut PaleoKits. Proceeds from Steve's Originals sales directly fund Steve's Club Camden and Steve's Club National Program. We are proud to say when you buy a kit, you help save a kid!

When customers call about our food products and I answer the phone, it never fails to surprise them. I love answering questions and being able to thank people for their support. Without it, we would be unable to touch the lives that we do.

With well over 2,000 CrossFit affiliates around the world, imagine what a stronger place our world would be if each opened its doors to just one class of six kids per day.

Nearly 100 kids are serviced through Steve's Club annually. We are proud of our reach, but it's really just a grain of sand in the 50-lb. bag our kids have learned to clean and jerk. As long as there are youths willing to receive guidance through the pursuit of elite fitness, I want to help and inspire others to do the same. With well over 2,000 CrossFit affiliates around the world, imagine what a stronger place our world would be if each opened its doors to just one class of six kids per day.

Becoming a Local Club

Interested in setting up a Local Steve's Club at your CrossFit affiliate? Check out: Stevesclub.org/local_clubs/start_a_club/.

Benefits of being a Local Club in the Steve's Club National Program:

- Share your passion for fitness with kids who need a positive influence.
- Set up and manage your own non-profit without the administrative hassle of doing it from scratch.
- Have the appropriate legal and insurance structures in place so you're not putting yourself at risk.
- Save time by using our member resources (templates, form letters, best practices and promotional material) to help grow and market your program.
- Accept tax-deductible donations and fundraise to support your program.



Steve Liberati hopes others will join him in helping kids get fitter.



"Kids are discovering that a strong body equals a strong mind." —Steve Liberati

Changing Lives

Anecdotal evidence can be provided, but it's often hard to quantify results driven by not-for-profits. CrossFit changes this. There is measurable work to be done. It is work of the highest order and the highest discipline. Kids are walking around Camden now with their hearts set on having the valor it takes to record a higher CrossFit Total or beat their previous Fran time. Their alternative pursuits have been replaced with elite fitness.

In an effort to duplicate our model and share our learning with affiliates around the world, we have created the [Steve's Club National Program](#). This not-for-profit entity works with affiliates to create similar youth fitness and mentoring programs at their gyms. Establishing a Local Steve's Club is an easy and fulfilling way to make a difference with kids in your city or community.

As part of the Steve's Club National Program, Local Clubs can use our national charter to gain 501c3 status and fundraise for their youth program. We make it easy for affiliates to start a Local Club and focus on the important work of training kids without being bound by administrative and legal red tape.

Steve's Club Beat the Streets Fundraiser

Date: May 14-15, 2011

The Steve's Club National Program is making great progress but still needs your help.

Last year, over 15 affiliates raised close to \$20,000 to help establish new Local Clubs across the country. This year the CrossFit affiliate community will team up again to Beat the Streets and "strengthen a nation one kid at a time."

On May 14-15, 2011, consider hosting this WOD (donations suggested) at your box, or join us in Camden, N.J., on May 14:

- Team WOD (teams of three, with at least one female).
- Social and Competitive (RX'd) divisions make it perfect for all levels—elite athletes and friends and family.
- Suggested donation: \$25—or any amount participants want to give.
- Local and national prizes.

Check out the WOD [here](#).

Every dollar raised gets a kid off the streets and into CrossFit.



As part of our network, Local Clubs have access to shared member resources, legal guidelines, insurance structures, accounting practices and, most importantly, the ability to raise funds through our annual Beat the Streets Fundraiser (held this year May 14-15).

Thanking the CrossFit community for all its support would be impossible. Recruiting affiliates all around the country to share their love of CrossFit with underprivileged youth is the best way I can think of to offer my gratitude. It's not work when you are doing something you love each and every day.

We are excited to say that Local Clubs are starting to pop up around the country, and together we are sharing our love for fitness with underprivileged and inner-city youth. Kids are discovering that a strong body equals a strong mind and that every choice made today affects potential for tomorrow.

There are many ways to get involved with the Steve's Club National Program. You can:

1. Start a Local Club.
2. Donate online.
3. Create a scholarship fund.
4. Take part in our Beat the Streets Fundraiser.
5. Continue to enjoy PaleoKits, PaleoKrunch and other Steve's Original products.

I hope I can inspire others to join the cause and share their passion for fitness with those less fortunate. For more information, visit stevesclub.org. If you have any questions, call me. I'll answer as long as it is not between 4-5 p.m., when I'm training Steve's Club. That's the hour that makes the other 10 more meaningful.



About the Authors



Steve Liberati started the original Steve's Club in Camden, N.J., in May 2007 to make a difference in the lives of underprivileged kids in his community. Now as the executive director of the Steve's Club National Program, Steve hopes to empower and support others as they take on the same rewarding challenge of starting a youth program in their own community. Steve studied economics at the University of Delaware and is grateful to be able to wake up every day as a social entrepreneur who does work that is meaningful and fulfilling. He is also the creator of PaleoKits (sold through Steve's Original) and the owner of CrossFit Tribe (which shares its space with Steve's Club). He placed 17th at the Northeast Regionals in 2010 and was a member of the CrossFit Tribe affiliate team that competed at the 2010 Games. Steve is married and has a two-year-old son Dominic and a baby girl due in May. E-mail him at steve@stevesclub.org.



Lee Knight is the co-founder and program director of the Steve's Club National Program. Equipped with a strong consulting and strategic-planning background, she has been instrumental in expanding Steve's Club nationwide and is passionate about bringing fitness to at-risk kids across the country. Lee studied mechanical engineering at MIT, was a senior planning analyst for a multinational company and ran her own consulting/coaching firm. She is also a former gymnast and international-level rugby athlete, having represented the USA at the 2006 World Cup. Lee started CrossFit in 2008 and qualified for the CrossFit Games as an individual in 2009 and with the CrossFit Fairfax affiliate team in 2010. E-mail her at lee@stevesclub.org.