



In a move destined to change the lives of many, in January of 2012, the Rush Soccer Club and FESA joined forces, to help the youth of El Salvador achieve better lives through education and sports. FESA, which stands for Fundacion Educando A Un Salvadoreño, is an organization that was started by four El Salvadoran businessmen. They had each attended college in the United States, and saw the benefits that a US education could provide to the youth of their country. They wanted the young boys of El Salvador to have a bright future, along with an opportunity to change their lives, and the founders saw a way to that route by starting FESA in El Salvador.

Beginning at age 11, boys can try out for one of the spots available at FESA. For those boys accepted, they get to join with other young men, and not only participate in either soccer or baseball, but they also live in dormitories during the school year. While living on the FESA grounds, the boys receive an education, including learning to read, write, and speak English, as well as taking other core courses; the same ones that children in the United States take. They also receive any necessary health and dental care, while they are members of FESA. When not in class, the boys spend their time training in their chosen sport. There are only 125 beds available in the FESA dorms, but that does not stop swarms of boys from trying out every year, in the hopes that they will capture one of the elusive spots at FESA.

Since FESA is located in the capital of El Salvador, those boys that live in San Salvador have the option to stay at home and live with their families, during the school year. They still attend school at FESA, and take part in all of the trainings and games. The boys that live in the dorms are able to go home on the weekends, for school vacations, and over the summer break. For those boys that are lucky enough to be a part of FESA, they attend school at FESA through the 12th grade. At the end of 12th grade, they can graduate and receive a high school diploma. FESA does not offer anything to the boys after high school, so FESA tries to seek out places around the world, for the boys to participate in their sports.



Ruben Siguenza, CO Rush Technical Director Erik Bushey and Jonathan Barahona.

The partnership with Rush is all about continuing what FESA started. It's about bringing the boys to the United States, in the hopes that they can get to the next level. Rush went down to El Salvador earlier this year, and interviewed several young men with the intent of bringing them to the Rush clubs in the US, to join the Rush Developmental Academy teams. There are currently 5 FESA boys living with host families in Texas. They participate on the Developmental Academy teams for Texas Rush, training with the teams and playing in the Academy games. Don Gemmell, the Technical Director of Texas Rush, said "When the host families and the boys all get together, it's just like one big family."

Living with host families in Colorado, are two more boys from FESA. They participate on the U18 Academy team for Colorado Rush. Their host family has enjoyed having the boys live with them. They found that the El Salvadorans were most interested, and amazed, by the technology available in the US. Chris Crowley said that, "The boys had never seen a dishwasher before. When they tried to help load the dishes, they ended up stacking the cups one on top of the other. They had no idea how a dishwasher worked." The simple things we take for granted, living in the United States, are miracles of technology for the boys. The Crowleys have also enjoyed the exchange of culture between their sons and the El Salvadoran boys. One of the things the boys miss most about El Salvador is their mother's home cooking, and they often talk about their favorite El Salvadoran foods and dishes, sharing their cultural heritage with us.

Between intensive Academy training sessions, and traveling to, and playing in games, the FESA boys are busy. But they don't sit idly by waiting for the next training session or game. Instead, they are furthering their educations, by having Texas and Colorado families aid them in their studies. Some are learning more English, while others are honing their math and reading skills. And, while they are training or playing games, they are being carefully watched by college coaches and scouts, in the hopes that they can extend their soccer careers in American universities, or on professional teams. By continuing their education, both on the soccer field and off the FESA boys, currently in the US, are providing a role model for the boys who are presently attending FESA. They are giving those boys something to strive for; making them so eager, that the current FESA students work extra hard in the hopes that they will be the next ones chosen to come play for Rush, and receive the same opportunities the current crop of FESA boys are getting. While

the boys are offered insights into American culture and life, they bring their soccer experience with them to the field. Because the FESA boys have been immersed, since a young age in a soccer culture, they can help improve the Rush Academy teams, and the level of talent on the field. FESA helps change the lives of the El Salvadoran youth for the better. Those boys that come to the US help enrich the lives of those they come in contact with. When one of the directors of FESA recently spoke with Don Gemmell, he was most interested in how the boys were adapting to life in the United States, and how their education was progressing. He knows that the future for boys in El Salvador is through a better education, and the opportunities that the Rush can provide to help those boys achieve their dreams, is within their grasp.