

Domain 3: Schools and Before- and After- School Providers

“Shaping a Healthy Future” Award- Lily Rees and Joel Chrisco

Lily Rees and Joel Chrisco, both employees of the International Rescue Committee, are being awarded today for their initiative in starting a girls' basketball team to meet the special needs of Muslim girls. The majority of these girls at Crawford High School are refugee students who participate in Students Plus, an IRC after-school program on campus.

The basketball program was created at the request of the students and with the support of the Crawford High School principals. While Lily worked with the girls to initiate and organize the team, Joel volunteered each week and served as the coach. The program was a huge success from the beginning. Lily and Joel engaged over 30 girls during the season, with an average of 20 students attending each week. The program increased the girls' self-confidence, provided a fantastic, culturally appropriate outlet for physical activity and demonstrated their ability to excel at sports. In fact, a few have even gone on to try out for the high school team!

The students made a video about their basketball team which recently won a grant from Gatorade, allowing the girls to buy uniforms. Although many schools offer after-school sports, IRC is one of the few that makes athletics accessible to Muslim girls. In addition to basketball, the Students Plus program also offers girls opportunities to snorkel, surf, hike and rock climb.