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**SOCCER – GROWING OUR YOUTH AS LEADERS -
FBI COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT**

Kansas City, MO - Today over 250 volunteers from across the United States participated in the beautification project of Belvidere Park. The volunteers representing the following organizations: FBI; FBI National Citizens' Academy Alumni Association; Kansas City Parks and Rec; Don Boscoss Center; Northeast International Soccer League; Kansas City Power and Light; Kansas City Wizards; Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and **A.L. Huber** general contracting worked tirelessly clearing brush, planting trees, installing bleachers, barbeque pits, lighting and lining the fields in an effort to strengthen relationships within the community and provide a positive outlet for the children of the northeast area to enjoy. "We know that in a normal day in Northeast, children are exposed to risk factors that they encounter just on the way between home and school. But we also know how much our youth are capable of offering this country, if given the opportunity to grow as leaders," said Alejandro Cabero of the Northeast Soccer International League.

Belvidere Park is utilized significantly by the Northeast International Soccer League. The league, which was started five years ago by concerned parents as a way to keep their children out of gangs, has expanded greatly, providing an excellent outlet for over 600 area youth engaged in the universal means of communication – soccer. "The Northeast Neighborhood has 54 different languages and cultures and one thing they have in common is soccer – it transcends all those barriers," said Tammie Tritico, Kansas City Parks and Rec.

Today's Community Engagement Project marks the start of the FBI's Community Outreach In-Service which is a joint conference between the FBI's community outreach specialists and the FBI Citizens' Academy Alumni Association (FBICAAA). Special Agent in Charge Brian Truchon of the Kansas City Division of the FBI noted how this type of engagement project is a first for the FBI. "The FBI has actively been working

with our local and national community partners building and strengthening relationships, but a project of this scale is a first of its kind for the FBI and I'm glad it happened in Kansas City."

The Community Engagement Project was conceived last year through collaboration between the FBI and the FBINCAAA as a mechanism to actively partner with other organizations enabling the FBI to give back to the community and change the ideas of what kids see on TV, in newspapers and when they think of the FBI. The positive response regarding this project from all partners was overwhelming said Polly Brunkhardt, project manager for the FBI Kansas City Citizens' Academy Alumni. "All of the partners we approached about assisting in the project fully embraced the idea and brought so much more than we expected to the table enhancing greatly what we could accomplish."

This new partnership is one that will certainly help us address one part of Kansas City that needs a lot of attention said John Fierro, President KC Parks and Recreation Board of Commissioners. "With this project we're able to bring some needed improvements to a park that can provide positive amenities for neighborhood kids."