Baseball is Changing Lives in Colombia

In Colombia, where soccer has so many passionate fans, it is surprising to see that baseball is helping change the lives of hundreds of boys and girls. Beisboleritos, also known as Little Baseballers, is a program run by Grupo Internacional de Paz (GIP), an NGO that started working with children in vulnerable environments to strengthen them through a sport methodology based on a psychosocial component. Beisboleritos began running in 2012 on the outskirts of Medellín, where GIP bases its operations.

Santa Margarita, one of the most vulnerable neighborhoods in Medellin, is home to the Echeverri family. While searching for an extracurricular activity for his two sons, Mr. Ruben Echeverri discovered Beisboleritos and enrolled them with the hope they would be positively mentored and influenced through sports and kept away from the negative and dangerous behavior learned from hanging in the streets.

The methodology of the Beisboleritos program is to connect with and influence children through sports guided by a professional coach along with a psychosocial person, where they are invited to learn about life with baseball. Nancy Giraldo, the psychosocial professional in charge of development the programming, says Juan Pablo Echeverri, who is 9-years old and the older brother, solves conflicts through aggression, but he questions that approach and admits he knows there are different ways to solve friction with his peers. Before, he used to think the only way to solve
problems was through fighting, now he has an awareness of peaceful problem solving that he did not have before.

Recently, the boys and girls of Beisboleritos had the opportunity to share their experiences with visitors from another organization called [More than a Game](https://www.morethanagame.org), a non-profit based out of California. More than a Game runs their program similarly using baseball to aid youth in the United States and abroad. During a visit to Colombia, the two organizations had the opportunity to share their methods and ideas for future projects together.

The director of More than a Game, Marshall Murray, along with professional player Josh Miller, hosted a sports clinic with the Beisboleritos. Murray expressed the enthusiasm that both the coach and the children had, and both of them were grateful for the opportunity to play with them. Children like the Echeverri had the chance to spent one afternoon with Marshal and Josh, and they were witness of the positive change that Beisboleritos is causing in their lives.

The director of Grupo Internacional de Paz, Beatriz Mejia, will work this year to connect with and strengthen relations with other organizations like More than a Game, as they can help each other through their similar goals and process of attaining those goals through baseball. One advantage other organizations offer is the involvement of professional baseball players. Mejia hopes to see the Little Baseballers receive the chance to visit and spend more time with professional players wherever they are.