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# Speaking the World Cup's universal language

Volunteers prepare new soccer field during the World Cup Boston service learning day. *Photos courtesy South Africa Partners, sponsor of World Cup Boston*

**June 11, 2010**

As the 2010 World Cup tournament opened Friday in South Africa, leaders of Northeastern's **Sport in Society** center were preparing to travel to Johannesburg later this month to work on educational initiatives that build on the event's immense global popularity.

Meghan Mahoney, manager of operations for Sport in Society, and Dave Czesniuk, the director of operations, will lead workshops that focus on gender violence prevention and the connections between sport, leadership and social change.

"The World Cup is the perfect occasion to communicate our message on an international stage," said Czesniuk. "The workshops offer lessons that defy borders and languages."

Sport in Society also was invited by FIFA (the French acronym for the International Federation of Association Football) to host a youth forum in conjunction with its Football for Hope Festival.

The festival, an official event of the World Cup, will bring together 32 teams of young people from disadvantaged communities around the world for a celebration of education, culture and football. The festival will address social issues such as homelessness, HIV/AIDS and refugee settlement. The forum is sponsored through a partnership with the Man Up Campaign, a global anti-violence campaign.

Closer to home, Sport in Society also will participate in World Cup Boston, which is using soccer and the popularity of the tournament to bring together divergent local communities and build stronger intercultural dialogue.

Sport in Society has been helping to infuse diversity training and conflict resolution into many World Cup Boston projects, including education events for soccer coaches from around the city and a World Cup Boston Service Learning Day.

"World Cup Boston has given us an opportunity to engage soccer coaches in our community and give them the tools to hold conversations about diversity with their players," said Mahoney.

World Cup Boston will host a mini-World Cup soccer tournament this month, during which Sport in Society will hold further training sessions for athletes and coaches.

The center is also working with the advocacy group Active Voice to promote the documentary, "Have You Heard From Johannesburg," which chronicles the history of the global anti-apartheid movement.

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