

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **HIJABS & HAT-TRICKS LAUNCH SOCCERNITES PROGRAMME**

**Monday 18.04.2016:** Hijabs & Hat-tricks, the award winning programme that encourages young Muslim women to play football, has launched a Diverse City FC Soccernites programme on Monday nights from 7pm to 8pm at O' Connell School, North Richmond St., Dublin 1

Soccernites is a free weekly football training programme for young people in inner city Dublin run by Sport Against Racism Ireland (SARI) to promote social inclusion and cultural awareness. SARI Soccernites currently takes place at DCC all weather pitches in Clontarf where it has engaged 400 young people since 2010, the programme is now being expanded by SARI Youth Leaders and founders of Diverse City FC and Hijabs and Hat-tricks siblings Fadhila Hajji and Abdul Hajji.

Diverse City FC Soccernites will be held on Monday nights from 7pm to 8pm at O' Connell School, North Richmond St., Dublin 1 and is open to all girls over 15 years old. Ms. Hajji, who won RTE/REHAB Person of the Year in 2015 for her role in promoting equality and challenging discrimination, will be visiting schools across Dublin to encourage young girls to get involved.

Ms. Hajji said "Diverse City FC brings together young women from all backgrounds, cultures and religions, united by a shared passion for their sport and we would welcome any girl over the age of 15, of all faiths and none, who would like to play football. Diverse City FC Soccernites is on every Monday hail, rain or shine and we hope that young girls from across Dublin will come down and see what it is all about. Having participated in Soccernites myself and trained in the SARI Youth leader programme I know that together we can create a fun evening, improve our soccer skills and develop confidence and skills outside the sport itself."

Hijabs and Hat tricks was set up in 2014 following the lifting of the Fifa ban on hijabs in football, which meant women were now able

to compete in competitive football wearing their traditional headgear. SARI seized the opportunity and organised the Hijabs and Hat Tricks initiative which encourages young Muslim women to play football and to further intercultural dialogue. The emerging team Diverse City FC is now expanded young women of all faiths and play on the team.

The Hijabs and Hat-tricks programme was awarded Best New Project prize at the prestigious Beyond Sport Awards in London, October 2015 and the expansion of the programme is facilitated by the Beyond Sport Prize. In turn the participants of Hijabs & Hat-tricks and Diverse City FC have become youth leaders and coaches representing SARI at national and international conferences and symposia including the Commonwealth of Nations Youth Forum in Malta, the Anna Lindh Foundation conference in Tarragona, Spain and the Women in Sport conference at Dublin Castle organised by the Dept. of Justice.

SARI Director and former Ireland Football Manager Brian Kerr said: “Diverse City FC continue to go from strength to strength and are an absolute inspiration to us all. This is a talented group of young footballers who have seen an opportunity to effect real social change, challenge stereotypes and bring people together and shows people how brilliant sport is at breaking down boundaries. SARI’s projects and programmes are designed to deliver tangible results – from providing a pathway to participation in Irish society for new migrant communities to outlets for inclusion for residents of Direct Provision Centres and driving awareness of anti-discrimination in schools – SARI has reached and engaged with thousands of people across the country and we hope this Diverse City FC Soccernites programme can continue that good work.”

To find out more about Diverse City FC and the Soccernites programme log onto [www.SARI.ie](http://www.SARI.ie) or follow on <https://www.facebook.com/SARIMuslimSoccerteam/>

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