

Hello again and welcome back. I'm June Simms in Washington.

Today on As It Is...

Happy birthday wishes going out to Big Joe Turner. Some say rock and roll would have never happened without him.

And we hear about the first national women's soccer team for Tibet.

But first, we report on efforts to move playtime back outside.

'Play Lady' Calls for Old-Fashioned Play

With the growing use of computers and electronic games, playing outside the home has become a lost art for many children. This is especially true in cities. But a former school teacher is working with children and adults to make "old-fashioned" play a regular part of their lives.

On a recent Sunday, a street in the Washington, DC area was closed to traffic and turned into a playground. Children and adults of all ages came outside to play.

“Well, that is my exercise, right? It is a gorgeous day. So we come out and play. I like to play. We all love to play. That's why we are here.”

Pat Rumbaugh has been organizing play days across the Washington area for the past five years. This one was held in Takoma Park, Maryland, which is also where she lives.

“We invite everyone, not only residents in Takoma Park but people beyond. Because really what we care about is encouraging everyone to play.”

Pat Rumbaugh is known as The Play Lady in this neighborhood. She taught physical education for 30 years before retiring recently. She says people need to play every day, especially if they work hard.

“Research does show that society, people in general, would feel so much better if they played. When people play they are less stressed, they are happier, they are more content with life.”

She says unstructured free play is especially important for children.

“Children learn to get along with one another, they learn to negotiate, they learn to be kind. Children learn new experiences, they learn how to play new games. ”

And they get to make up new activities, wearing clothes donated by neighbors.

“When they play with dress-up clothes, they become creative and imaginative, which they may not have tried before.”

Tony Castleman went to the play day with his two young sons. He says such events are not only good for children, but are also good for the community.

“I think it is a great way for the neighborhood just to sort of bond and to spend time together.”

Jamie Raskin represents Takoma Park in Maryland’s State Senate. He thinks the play dates are a great idea, too.

“I think it can be reproduced in cities and towns all over the state and across the country eventually.”

That, in fact, is Pat Rumbaugh’s next big goal.

“I decided that I would form a non-profit called Let’s Play America that helps facilitate play in communities, towns, cities all over America.”

You are listening to As It Is, from VOA Learning English. I’m June Simms.

First Tibetan Women’s Soccer Team Aims Big

Last year, an American teacher and 27 high school students formed the first Tibetan national women's soccer team. The students are all Tibetans who live outside Tibet. Over the past year, they have overcome critics who opposed the formation of the all-female team. And as we hear from Christopher Cruise, the team has become a sign of hope for other Tibetans.

News that a team of Tibetan women would enter a men's soccer competition last May sent excitement through the Tibetan exile community. There was also some disapproval.

José Cabezón is Dalai Lama chair professor of Tibetan Buddhism and cultural studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He says even Tibetans who have lived in exile for a long time hold on to some conservative ideas.

"Tibetan women have always had considerable and powerful role within the family, but less so in society. The patterns that existed tend to be preserved and change is not easily won in within Tibetan society."

Cassie Childers is a 31-year-old teacher from New Jersey. Hope of the team one day playing in the Olympic Games is the driving force behind Tibetan women's soccer.

She says Tibetan men already have a national team and the Tibetan government-in-exile offers financial support for boys' teams in schools.

"But nothing for the girls. So we have two main aims. The first is to empower and improve the lives of all Tibetan women. And the second is to form Tibet's first women's national team. It's very political actually. I'm not going to pretend it's not. We're training our players to speak their truth and to tell the world about Tibet as a tool for peace."

Many of the young women chosen for the team were born inside Tibet. They had walked with their parents across the Himalayas to escape Chinese rule.

Some had never before kicked a soccer ball. Players from nine schools trained intensely for a month to play their first game.

Cassie Childers says questions about the team's standing seemed to disappear as soon as play began. So did any opposition to women taking part in a competitive sport.

"There were 5,000 Tibetans in attendance. And when they saw our team walk out onto that ground, something shifted. And they could see wow this is something real. This is something big."

And, then shortly after the second half began, Lhamo Kyi recorded the first goal in the history of Tibetan women's soccer.

"This girl kicked the ball in the net and then ran into the middle of the ground and did a flip. And, that was the moment history changed for Tibetan women, I think. From that moment, I have never heard a negative comment."

Although they did not win the competition, Coach Cassie and her players have already won other victories. By 2017, the Tibetan women hope to win full international recognition from FIFA, which governs football around the world. I'm Christopher Cruise.

That's all for As It Is, I'm June Simms in Washington. Thanks for spending time with us today. For questions or comments about our show, email us at special@voanews.com or visit our website at learningenglish.voanews.com and click on "Contact Us."

Happy Birthday Big Joe Turner

We leave you with music from legendary singer Big Joe Turner. The so-called "boss of the blues" and "grandfather of rock and roll" was born on this day in 1911. He is perhaps most well-known for his 1954 hit song "Shake, Rattle and Roll."

Have a great day!