

WHISTLE BLOWERS REQUIRED

Fancy being a whistle blower – then Southland Football may have just the job for you.

Football has had such a resurgence in Southland that administrators are desperately seeking more officials.

Southland Football development officer Ken Cresswell said player numbers in the junior, senior men's and women's competitions had increased from 1800 in 2008, to 2000 in 2009. This had created a shortage in referees.

"We have about eight officials at the moment but we really need between 20 and 30," he said.

"They are a small but very dedicated group but we're really keen to get some more people into that group and support them."

Grants from the ILT Foundation (\$75,000) and Invercargill Licensing Trust (\$25,000) totalling \$100,000 will be used to get the new recruitment campaign underway. The grants would also be used for administration costs, and part of the Spirit Southland and Southland Women teams' expenses.

Cresswell said it was important if the level of football within the region was to be improved then top-quality officials were needed.

'We've struggled for years where people on the sideline have just jumped in and done the job.

"Now we are developing the game to a higher level we really need the officials, who are well trained, to officiate at the matches."

The impact of well-trained referees would mean a stimulating and well structured competition for all those who played, he said.

Any applicants would be given formal training and be mentored by current referees.

"We're looking for people who have a basic understanding of the sport and its rules.

"The development of the referees will be a thorough process of learning, where they will cover the rules and laws, and how to apply them in a game."

It was hoped the new referee recruits would be trained in time for the 2010 season.

ILT Foundation and Invercargill Licensing Trust chairman Alan Dennis said the growth of football in Invercargill was an outstanding achievement.

"Southland Football has taken this sport that was dwindling a few years ago, to one which has had a 10 to 15 per cent increase for the past couple of years.

"Along with the redevelopment of Turnbull Thomson Park, that we have also financially supported, we see this sport taking great strides to increase its membership and create the best possible playing environment for all to enjoy - it's just fantastic. We can see participation in football getting even stronger in the future because of these great initiatives."

Anyone interested in becoming a referee should contact Ken Cresswell at Southland Football.