

## **\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\***

# **Beyond Soccer, Inc Awarded 2018 Sports 4 Life Grant by Women's Sports Foundation and espnW**

**Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation joins the effort to empower young girls of color through sports**

Lawrence, MA – Today, the Women's Sports Foundation and espnW, in collaboration with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, announced Beyond Soccer as a 2018 recipient of the Sports 4 Life initiative, a national effort to increase the participation and retention of African-American and Hispanic girls in youth sports programs.

Sports 4 Life, cofounded by the Women's Sports Foundation and espnW in 2014, and supported by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation in regions including Southeast Michigan and Western New York, supports programs that help girls in four foundational areas – leadership, self-esteem, confidence and perseverance – with the expectation that growth in these areas will also support girls' physical and emotional health and academic success. Recognizing the value of Sports 4 Life, the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation joined the initiative this year to provide regional support to eight organizations in Southeast Michigan and Western New York.

"Our vision is that one day, all girls will have the opportunity to reach their full potential through the transformative experience of sports," said Deborah Antoine, CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation. "Even more than we believe in the power of sports, the Women's Sports Foundation believes that all girls – regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ability, zip code or family income – deserve equitable access to the lifelong benefits of sports. We're proud to team up with espnW and the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation to make that vision a reality."

"In a few short years of commitment and focused attention, we have seen the tangible positive results that Sports 4 Life has brought to the lives of girls of color across the country," said Laura Gentile, ESPN senior vice president, espnW & ESPN Business Operations & Content Strategy. "This program demonstrates the universal value & appeal of sports and it is an integral piece of the espnW mission. We look forward to continuing to empower girls to realize their full potential through sports."

Since the initiative's inception in 2014, Sports 4 Life has awarded 200 grants totaling more than \$1.1 million and reaching more than 50,000 girls nationally. With WSF's support, Beyond Soccer and other community and regional partners have been particularly successful in increasing opportunities for girls of color: more than 85% percent of girl participants identify as African-American or Hispanic.

### **Press Contact**

**Stephanie McArdle**

**Stephanie@beyondsoccerlawrence.org**

**www.beyondsoccerlawrence.org**



## **\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\***

# **Beyond Soccer, Inc Awarded 2018 Sports 4 Life Grant by Women's Sports Foundation and espnW**

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation joins the effort to empower young girls of color through sports

"It's unbelievably motivating to be supported by such an influential, national foundation that does so much to level the playing field for females across the country. When we started, we had 12 girls on the City's first travel team, and since then have been working tirelessly to expand and promote quality, year-round sports experiences for more deserving females in Lawrence. This important work cannot be done alone. Foundations, like WSF, help us bridge sports participation gaps, plus support important supplemental health, leadership, and academic programs that help our girls develop into strong, confident, well-rounded, healthy women. Thank you for your commitment to groups like Beyond Soccer. You are changing the trajectory of so many lives. Our girls and their families say Thank you!" -Stephanie McArdle, Beyond Soccer Executive Director

**About Beyond Soccer:** Since 2006, when Beyond Soccer formed Lawrence's first girls team --the Wolves-- for competition in the Essex County Travel League, its programs have been helping kids move in the right direction related to obesity prevention, enhanced high school graduation and improved sports participation and retention rates. Today, Beyond Soccer connects 2,000 boys and girls, with much of that tracked to the Lawrence Public Schools through comprehensive school-day sport, team-building & fitness curriculum. Travel Soccer, our principal program, has been flourishing since that first girls team almost 12 years ago. It provides 250 middle and high school youth with a minimum of 26 weeks of consistent participation. These players also benefit from homework assistance in our office computer lab, summertime employment, plus financial literacy, and other college counseling support to help them become better prepared following high school. Beyond Soccer's cooking courses and "Fuel for Performance" programs focus on preparing meals with healthy ingredients in its on-site Health Kicks! teaching kitchen. Further, our recreational soccer league presents an important after-school feeder program for elementary school students in the spring and fall and a great opportunity for high school participants to get involved as Junior Coach Mentors. A menu of summer camps give our city kids meaningful, quality, and affordable summertime experiences, where they can maintain access to our long term, year-round support system, where they can develop their sports interests, and find inspiration from motivational speakers, fitness, and sports professionals. Included programs are a collaborative Lawrence Sports Leadership Academy, which reached 165 middle and high school youth in its 2nd year, and a two-week Soccer & Wellness Camp, heading into its 8th year this July.

### **Press Contact**

**Stephanie McArdle**

**Stephanie@beyondsoccerlawrence.org**

**www.beyondsoccerlawrence.org**

