



**When girls play,  
they lead,  
and we all win!™**

**Impact Report**

Published 2025



Alan Springer, Springtime Media

## WELCOME

**T**he Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) is delighted to share this report of our work and powerful impact.

2024 marked a significant milestone for WSF - our 50th anniversary! What was started with a \$5,000 check by our visionary founder, Billie Jean King, in 1974, we have steadfastly grown into a multifaceted organization that has invested over \$115 million to help girls and women play, compete and lead in sports. Take a look at our 50th tribute on page 14.

Yes, we are proud of our five decades of changing the game. But we also know there is urgent work yet to be done. Think about it: high school girls today have 1.2 million fewer sport participation opportunities than boys; at the collegiate level, women receive nearly 80,000 fewer opportunities to compete. Further, the striking shortage of women in coaching persists, and the leadership roles in professional leagues and teams as well as organizations and brands, are still predominantly held by men.

These are just several examples of the gender gap in sports; disparities exist across the landscape, with repercussions that go well beyond the field of play. When girls and women are sidelined, they miss out on benefits and skills that impact our workforce, economy, and society.

WSF research proves that sport participation at all levels is not a nice-to-have, but a must have for girls and women. From lowering depression and anxiety in girls, to fostering women's leadership in careers, communities and at home, the power of sports is transformational and profound. You can read about our latest research on pages 16 - 19.

Title IX opened the door that has directly led to the interest and excitement we see in women's sports today. But we know that progress made does not guarantee progress to come. That is why WSF fights to protect this landmark law and remains unwavering in our advocacy and our mission to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sport and life.

WSF does not do this alone. We are grateful to all of our many donors, partners, athletes, Trustees, and leaders who join and support us - thank you!

The past 50 years have changed the game and together with your continued support, the next 50 years will change the world,

Danette Leighton, CEO

Scout Bassett, President

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## MISSION

**T**he Women's Sports Foundation exists to enable girls and women to reach their potential in sport and life.

Founded by Billie Jean King in 1974, we are one of the *first* organizations to recognize the powerful connection between sport access, leadership, and society. For 50 years and counting, WSF has been changing the game through our research, advocacy, and community programming, investing over **\$115 million** to help girls and women play, compete, and lead – in sports and beyond – without barriers.

A leader and champion of the *entire* women's sports ecosystem, WSF amplifies the vital societal and cultural impact that is made when girls and women play sports.

**When girls play, they lead, and we all win!™**

## PILLARS OF IMPACT

### Advocacy in Action

Through grassroots education and public policy, we work to advance safe, fair and equal sports opportunities for girls and women to thrive. We focus on a broad range of issues like the protection of Title IX, equal resources and treatment at the collegiate level, equal pay, increased media coverage and investment in women's sports. Our work bolsters the pipeline for all girls and women to play, coach and lead, and seeks to improve sport access for marginalized and underserved communities.

### Research to Practice

Everything we do is backed by evidence-based research. We examine factors that influence sport access and opportunity, applying findings to our advocacy and programmatic work, and supporting the broader sport ecosystem. We focus on the entire girls' and women's sports pipeline – from youth sport development through high school, collegiate and elite levels of play – with a focus on serving the most marginalized.

### Community Impact

To ensure that the girls' and women's sports pipeline is healthy and always growing, we provide grants to organizations in under-resourced communities that get and keep girls in the game; elite athletes who need funding to continue their training and travel to competitions at the highest levels of sport; and fellowship and mentorship programs to inspire a new generation of women coaches, scouts and leaders.

### Collaborative Partnerships

We partner with renowned national brands, powerhouse media entities, corporate supporters, passionate athletes and more, to shine a spotlight on the power and potential of girls and women in sports. Our collaborative partnerships educate, engage, excite and inspire.

“

Wrestling has taught me so much about myself and my limits. I have pushed myself harder than I ever had to pick myself up from my lowest point. Not only that, but wrestling has made me appreciate the value of having a team to rely on. I may be by myself on the mat, but I can always rely on my teammates to pick me up after a loss or after a bad practice.

– Ella, age 15

”

## DID YOU KNOW?

**F**or over 50 years, the Women's Sports Foundation has been fighting to change the game for girls and women, to reach true equality on and off the field of play, in the classroom, boardroom, and beyond.

**Less than 2%** of all charitable giving in the U.S. goes to girls' and women's causes.<sup>1</sup>

### Title IX changed the game;

**3.4M** girls playing high school sports today – which is<sup>2</sup>

**12X** higher than when Title IX was passed in 1972.<sup>3</sup>

**44%** of NCAA athletes are women, compared to 15% of collegiate athletes pre-Title IX.<sup>4</sup>

### But the fight is not over.

**1M** fewer high school sports opportunities for girls compared to boys = girls have yet to reach the same level the boys had in **1972!**<sup>5</sup>

**93%** of colleges and universities are likely out of Title IX compliance.<sup>6</sup>

**90%** to **42%** is the striking drop in women head coaches of collegiate women's teams, since Title IX's passage.<sup>7</sup>

### For society to thrive, sports are a *must* have.

**1.5** to **2.5X** lower level of mental health disorders for girls who play sports vs. those who never played.<sup>8</sup>

**2/3** of women who played youth sports held at least one formal leadership role outside of the family.<sup>9</sup>

**71%** of women who had a formal leadership role held titles like Manager, Director, President, or C-suite Executive.<sup>10</sup>

**It matters, because when girls play, they lead, and we all win!**

## OUR REACH

### Travel & Training Fund

Since inception, we have awarded over

**\$2.7M**

in grants to nearly

**1,600**

athletes and teams.

Zoe Kalapos, WSF Travel & Training Fund grant recipient



### Student-Athlete Mentoring

Since its 2019 inception, we have helped

**106** NCAA student-athletes in

**23** sports, across

**43** universities, to translate the valuable skills acquired through sport into their future careers.

### Tara VanDerveer and Scott Pioli & Family Funds

After five grant periods, both funds combined have awarded over

**\$1.2M**

to support

**60**

coaches and scouts across

**15** sports.



Run4Fun, Inc.



### Sports 4 Life

Since inception, we have funded

**254**

organizations across

**40** states, Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands, providing

**\$2.8M**

in grants to nearly

**90,000**

girls participating in over

**40** traditional and non-traditional sports.

### Athlete Ambassador Program

Since inception, we have held over

**65**

events nationwide, connecting more than

**120**

elite and collegiate athletes with over

**26,500**

girls.



WSF Athlete Ambassador Program, NGWSD 2024



### National Girls & Women in Sports Day®

Annually, WSF powers this national day that spurs close to

**300** grassroots events with an estimated reach of

**200,000**

girls and women across the country.

### Grassroots Advocacy

Each week WSF posts #TakeActionTuesday, a social media campaign through The Equity Project®. This campaign connects our followers to the work WSF is doing and provides actionable steps anyone can take in their own community. In 2024, our #TakeActionTuesday posts reached over

**250,000**

people on Instagram.



### Newly Launched in 2024:

#### Scout Bassett Grant

We have awarded

**\$40,000**

in grants to

**5** athletes.

#### Athlete Recovery and Care Commitment Grant

We have awarded

**\$100,000**

in grants to

**10** athletes.

## OUR IMPACT

**O**ur mission, to empower girls and women to reach their full potential in sport and life, is vital. That is why WSF has invested over **\$115 million** in impact to level the playing field. Through bold advocacy, breakthrough research, community programming, and cross-sector partnerships, we help girls and women play, compete, and lead – in sports and beyond – without barriers.

“

WSF’s passion for change and commitment to keeping girls in sports sparked real momentum in our community. We are now hosting our second annual F.U.E.L. Summit for over 300 middle school girls across Oklahoma, empowering them through sport to positively shape their lives. Thanks for the inspiration; your work matters.

– Michelle Matthews, Oklahoma City Thunder, Director of Fan Development & Retail

”



Adam Reist, Dare to Be Films



WSF Leadership: Billie Jean King, Ilana Kloss, Scout Bassett, Danette Leighton, and Robin Harris

Empire State Realty Trust



WSF Captains and Past Presidents: Sasha DiGiulian, Aimee Mullins, Grete Eliassen, Benita Fitzgerald Mosley, and Meryl Davis

Adam Reist, Dare to Be Films



## 50 YEARS OF CHANGING THE GAME

**I**n 2024, the Women's Sports Foundation celebrated our 50th anniversary!

And what a year it was for WSF! We co-hosted a powerful Women's History Month reception honoring the societal impact of women in sports with the Vice President of the United States, and celebrated our 50-year legacy by lighting the iconic Empire State Building in WSF colors. We also proudly joined USTA in advocating for the Congressional Gold Medal in honor of our Founder, Billie Jean King, and cheered on 60 WSF grant recipients as they competed in the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris and 50 runners fundraising for WSF at the TCS New York City Marathon. Our 50th anniversary was a year for the history books, fitting of WSF leadership and legacy.

Shortly following the enactment of Title IX – the landmark law that helped pave the way for girls' and women's participation in sports – WSF was founded by sports icon and equality champion, Billie Jean King, as one of the **first** organizations to recognize the role of sports in empowering

girls and women to achieve their full potential in sport and life. What was started by our visionary founder in 1974 with a \$5,000 check has grown into a multifaceted organization that has invested over \$115 million to help girls and women play, compete, and lead – in sports and beyond – without barriers.

Fast forward to today and look at how far we have come. The explosion of interest and excitement around women's sports – shifting from "having a moment" to being recognized as a powerful movement – is not a coincidence. It is a direct result of the passage of Title IX and WSF's work to protect it through our research, advocacy and community programming. The girls and women playing today are beneficiaries of those 37 words, having had access to sports throughout their lives. As much as we celebrate that progress, we also know there is still much more work to be done to fulfill Title IX's full promise. Until equality is achieved, our work cannot and will not stop.

Together, alongside supporters like you, let us build on WSF's 50 years of impact to create a future where all girls and women can play because when they do, they lead and we all win.

Danette Leighton, Vice President Kamala Harris, and Billie Jean King



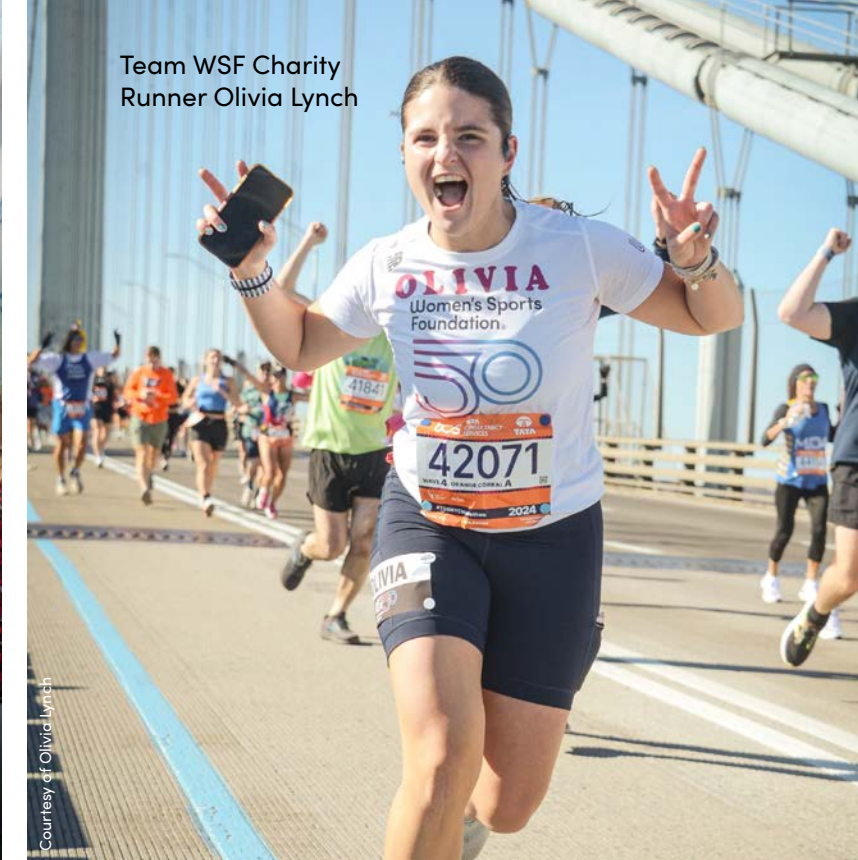
Official White House Photo by Lawrence Jackson

Ashleigh Johnson, Travel & Training Fund grant recipient



Adam Nurliewicz/Getty Images

Team WSF Charity Runner Olivia Lynch



Courtesy of Olivia Lynch

Natalie Schneider, WSF Sportswoman of the Year 2023



Getty Images

# “THRIVING THROUGH SPORT: THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT ON GIRLS’ MENTAL HEALTH”

**F**ar too many young people have been struggling with mental health issues, many consider it to be an epidemic. Drawing attention to this prominent health concern and a potential way to combat it, the Women’s Sports Foundation released “Thriving Through Sport: The Transformative Impact on Girls’ Mental Health.” This breakthrough research sheds light on the pivotal role of sports in fostering girls’ positive mental health.

The report findings underscore the power of sports – in supportive and inclusive settings – to help lower depression and anxiety, boost social connectedness,

and inspire a greater sense of meaning and purpose in girls who play, compared to girls who don’t or never played sports.

Our research report not only sheds light on the positive effects of sports participation on young girls’ mental well-being, but also underscores the urgency of prioritizing mental health support within the sports community. As mental health issues among youth remain a pressing concern, this WSF research serves as a crucial reminder of the transformative power of sports to empower girls to thrive.

This new WSF research shows that sports can play a powerful role in supporting girls’ mental well-being. Beyond physical activity, when girls play, they build relationships with their peers, learn to work as a team, and so much more. This data shows it can lower depression and anxiety and provide fulfillment and meaning. We need to make sure that all girls have access and opportunity to high quality, supportive environments in which to play sports, so they can reap these benefits.

– Dr. Claudia Reardon, Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health



Natasha Watley  
Foundation



Courtesy of Active Children Portland

## Sport participation can lower depression and anxiety.

Mental health disorders are

**1.5 to 2.5X**

lower for girls who play sports vs. those who never played.

### DEPRESSION

**29%** of girls who never played sports have moderate-to-high levels of depression symptoms vs. 17% of girls who currently play.

### ANXIETY

**21%** of girls who never played sports have moderate-to-high levels of anxiety symptoms vs. 11% of girls who currently play.

## Quality of sport settings impact mental health.

In sport settings that focus on effort, improvement and teamwork, **depression symptoms are significantly lower:**

**9.3%**

vs. settings where winning is the main goal and success is defined by ability compared to others:

**24.7%**



Girls Rugby Charlotte

In sport settings where girls have more “voice and choice” over goals and activities, **depression symptoms are significantly lower:**

**10.4%**  
vs. settings where they don’t have that opportunity:  
**35.1%**

“ I’ve played basketball and flag football while in school, and I’ve learned so much personally and as a teammate. At times it can be stressful, but we all have jobs to do and being able to lift each other up when we fall, is such a rewarding feeling. Being able to trust your team and do your best, you become in sync, you understand each other.

– Alisha, age 19

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RESEARCH

# “PLAY TO LEAD: THE GENERATIONAL IMPACT OF SPORT ON WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP”

**F**or decades, WSF research has shown that the benefits of sport, at any level, transcend beyond the field of play. In addition to the physical, social, and emotional benefits, it provides a path for girls to learn critical leadership skills to carry into adulthood and their future careers. “Play to Lead: The Generational Impact of Sport on Women’s Leadership” is our latest, powerful proof point.

This *first of its kind* study of women in their 20’s, 30’s, and up to 80’s, looked at the influence playing youth sports has had on their adult lives. It showcases the impact of Title IX, federal legislation passed in 1972, that created greater access to sport for millions of girls across the country. The report shows that women today who are leading across all sectors of society – from business, medicine and education to science and policy – credit their youth sports experience for driving their success. The key leadership qualities they learned from sports – confidence, problem solving and teamwork – prepared them for leadership in life.

This groundbreaking WSF research shows that for girls, sports are not a nice-to-have, but a *must-have*, with benefits that last a lifetime. More than just a research report, it is a call to action to invest in girls’ and women’s sports, because sport is an engine that drives leadership spanning all sectors throughout the nation and the globe.



## Play to Lead:

*The Generational Impact of Sport on Women’s Leadership*

A new look at the profound cross generational impact youth sport participation has had on women’s leadership development. Play to Lead is the latest proof point that the skills, traits and experiences girls learn through the transformative power of sport have the ability to build a vibrant leadership pipeline that benefits society at large.

Source: Sharrow, E., Staurowsky, E., & Davis, B. (2024). Play to Lead: The Generational Impact of Sports on Women’s Leadership. Women’s Sports Foundation

### YOUTH SPORTS FUEL WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP



**Half of Women**  
credit the skills acquired through sports for their leadership development



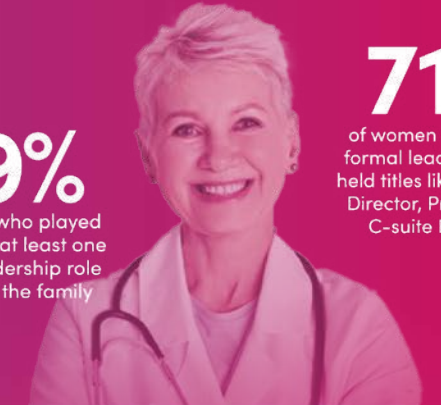
**49%**



**Longer Participation equals More Leadership**

The longer girls play sports, the more likely they are to hold formal leadership roles

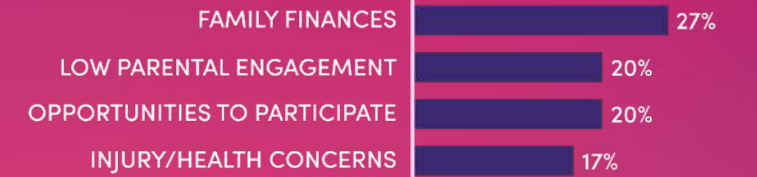
#### Top Skills Learned from Playing Sports



**71%**  
of women who had a formal leadership role held titles like Manager, Director, President, or C-suite Executive

### Leadership Roles & Sports

#### BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION PERSIST



Girls of color, LGBTQ+ youth, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds face even greater barriers



**Access to Sports Promotes Equity for All**  
Leadership outcomes from sports participation are consistent across all racial and ethnic groups

*Play to Lead* is more than just a research report, it is a call to action for everyone throughout society to invest in girls’ youth sports programs. It illuminates why sports are not a nice-to-have but a *must-have* for all girls, showcasing what can be achieved when they truly have equitable access and opportunity to play at the youth level.





Courtesy of the Office of Senator Butler

The Women’s Sports Foundation led an important Title IX session for my 318 Foundation, which aims to empower and uplift girls in the Shreveport, LA community. One of the coaches who attended was moved to action and successfully advocated for much-needed new uniforms and equipment for her team. WSP’s work really matters.

– Alana Beard, Women’s Basketball Hall of Fame inductee, 318 Foundation founder

ADVOCACY

# EQUITY IN ACTION

**T**he Women’s Sports Foundation is a crucial voice for girls and women in sports. We consistently seek to ensure that implications for gender equity are at the forefront of policy discussions, impacting sport policy and state and federal legislation.

We are critically focused on the evolving college sports landscape because we know that the progress made since the passage of Title IX does not guarantee progress to come. In addition to working with federal lawmakers on proposed legislation impacting college sports, WSF’s voice was instrumental in successfully opposing California’s AB 252, which would have established a revenue sharing model in California colleges and universities that posed a threat to Title IX compliance and broad-based sports offerings.

WSF also had the privilege to work alongside the USTA on legislation to award our Founder, Billie Jean King, the Congressional Gold Medal. Thanks to advocacy from constituents like you in the fall of 2024, we saw this signed into law. She is the first individual woman athlete to receive this honor.

WSF’s five decades of leadership and expertise has proven invaluable to influencing policy and educating and empowering the public.

ADVOCACY

# EQUALITY ON THE BIGGEST STAGE



Adam Preffy, Getty Images

**T**he 2024 Paris Olympic Games was projected to be the first-ever gender equal Olympics. Fitting, given the city also hosted the 1900 Games where women were first allowed to compete on the world’s greatest sport stage, though accounting for only 2.2% of all competitors at that time. Reaching gender equality takes time and investment at all levels of the sports ecosystem. Even with progress, the Paris Games still fell short. The fact remains that inequality continues to exist at the Olympic and Paralympic Games, not only in athlete representation, but within coaching and leadership as well.

That is why WSF CEO, Danette Leighton and WSF President, Scout Bassett co-wrote an opinion article that was published in USA Today – **“Gender equality at the Olympics is a gold medal victory. But there’s still work to do.”** – the day of the opening ceremonies.

Scan to view article



The piece draws from staggering findings from WSF’s Olympic and Paralympic Reports which highlight the disparities we must keep striving to overcome to truly reach equality at the Games.

We want women at the elite level of sport to be able to compete, coach and lead without barriers. WSF reports provide the most accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date examination of participation, media coverage and leadership trends at the Games, to inspire making the Olympic and Paralympic movement equal for all.

Check out our [WSF Olympic and Paralympic Games Report series](#).





PowerPlay NYC,  
Ashaunna Virgo  
(left)

Courtesy of PowerPlay NYC

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

# SPORTS 4 LIFE

**S**ports 4 Life is a national initiative co-founded in 2014 with ESPN, that seeks to increase the participation and retention of underserved girls of color, ages 11-18, in developmental youth sports programs.

2024 proudly marked the 10th anniversary of this impactful program, which has supported community organizations across the country in teaching girls intangible life and leadership lessons - confidence, self-esteem and perseverance - through the transformative power of sport, empowering them to become the leaders of tomorrow. Throughout the year, Sports 4 Life served over 9,500 girls of all abilities and provided them access to a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional sports, giving them the invaluable life and leadership skills that often come from playing sports.

Since its inception, Sports 4 Life has served nearly 90,000 girls, and over the past decade, the impact of receiving youth leadership opportunities through the program has shone brightly through its participants. Members from the inaugural class are already paying it forward and helping the next generation of young girls experience the tremendous benefits of playing sports.

In 2014, Ashaunna Virgo's mother enrolled her in PowerPlay NYC, a multi-sport health, wellness and leadership program, and Sports 4 Life community partner. Today, Ashaunna is a program coordinator, excited to give back to the program that gave so much to her.

“

It was such a defining moment for me; I made lifelong friendships with the other girls who helped me get out of my shell. It was a dream come true to be offered a job working under my old coach. I am now in a position to make an impact on young girls like me, helping them see how great they are, and that the world is theirs for the taking.

– Ashaunna Virgo

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## ATHLETE ADVANCEMENT

# TRAVEL & TRAINING FUND

**I**n partnership with Michelob ULTRA, the Travel & Training Fund provides financial support to women athletes with potential to be elite, who would otherwise be unable to afford to continue their pursuits. The Fund helps cover coaching, travel, and equipment – critical necessities to achieve even higher performance levels and rankings.

As the daughter of a U.S. diplomat family, Dominique Stater grew up traveling the world, living in five different countries: Nicaragua, Peru, Chile, Colombia, and Argentina. She began windsurfing when she moved to Buenos Aires and lived near a sailing center and competed throughout her youth. It was while attending the University of Miami where she kitesurfed that she learned about iQFOiL, a sailing discipline that was scheduled to debut at the Paris Games. Dominique dedicated herself to this new sailing discipline, winning the U.S. Olympic team trials to qualify for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, where she became the first Women's iQFOiL Olympian. She now has her sights set on making it to the LA 2028 Olympic Games.

Through this grant, WSF funded 105 women athletes in 2022 and 2023, 20 of whom qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Dominique Stater, WSF Travel & Training Fund grant recipient



Allison Chenard

“

The Travel & Training grant from the Women's Sports Foundation gave me the chance to spend more time on the water and enhanced my training program. That kind of support makes a real difference in an athlete's journey, and I'm incredibly thankful to be part of a community that believes in empowering women in sport.

– Dominique Stater

”



Courtesy of Femita Ayanbeku

ATHLETE ADVANCEMENT

# SCOUT BASSETT GRANT

**E**stablished by The Scout Bassett Fund in partnership with the Women’s Sports Foundation and Athletes for Impact, the Scout Bassett Grant is breaking down barriers by providing much-needed financial support to women athletes with disabilities. This exciting new grant launched in 2024, helps cover equipment, training, travel, and costs associated with competing at the elite level of sports.

At the young age of 11 years old, Femita Ayanbeku was in a severe car accident that resulted in her right leg being amputated due to loss of blood circulation. Fast forward almost 10 years later, in 2015, Femita attended a running clinic in Boston where she was selected to receive her first running blade. She has continued on ‘fast forward’ ever since.

A member of the inaugural Scout Bassett Grant class, Femita is a top-ranked 100-meter T64 sprinter, three-time Paralympian and eight-time National Champion. Six months after giving birth to her first child, she qualified for the 2024 Paris Paralympics in the 100-meter T64 event, and she’s aiming to make Team USA again for the LA 2028 Paralympic Games. “This grant allowed me to make recovery a priority. I was still recovering from giving birth as well as training very hard, so without proper recovery I don’t think I would have been able to continue to go as hard as I did.” Through this grant, WSF funded three women athletes who competed at the 2024 Paris Paralympic Games.

ATHLETE ADVANCEMENT

# ATHLETE RECOVERY AND CARE COMMITMENT GRANT

**W**SF has launched a new initiative with TYLENOL®, the Athlete Recovery and Care Commitment Grant, to support elite women athletes on their journey back from injury. This unique grant, established in 2024, provides financial support to help offset loss of compensation or extensive, expensive medical bills due to a career altering injury.

Injuries in sport happen every day, with some requiring added resources for athletes on the road to recovery. Washington Mystics forward Shakira Austin knows this from recent experience. Playing basketball since the eighth grade, Shakira has only faced one major injury in her basketball career - a hip labrum tear in 2024 that required surgery. Focused on getting back to 100 percent, she has gone through many months of rehab as well as a healthy inaugural season with the Unrivaled Basketball League in 2025. Shakira is determined to play to her full potential in the WNBA and beyond.

Opportunities for women athletes to get support during moments of recovery are limited and Shakira recognizes the unique value that WSF and TYLENOL® brought to her journey.

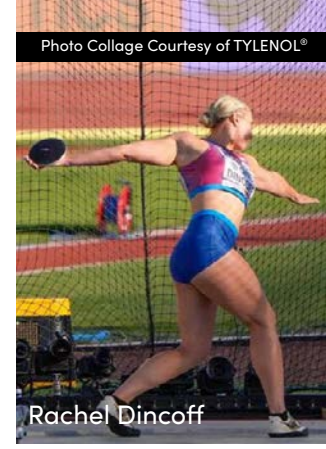
“

This grant has opened the door for everything that I’ve been wanting for my future, for my career. It’s an amazing opportunity for me to continue into my rehab process and figure out how to get back to where I want to be.

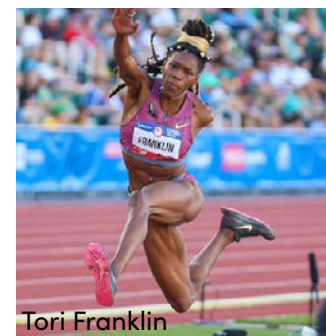
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– Shakira Austin

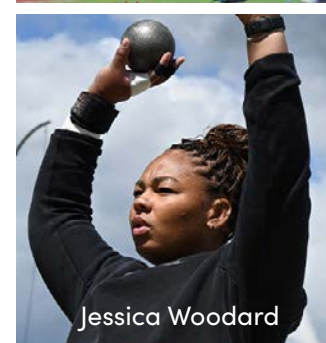
Photo Collage Courtesy of TYLENOL®



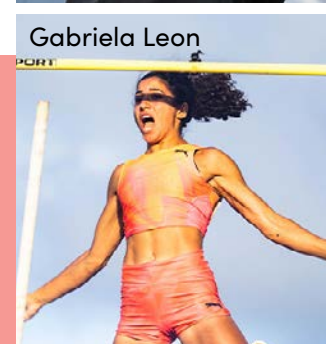
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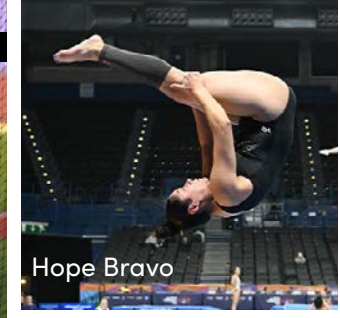
Tori Franklin



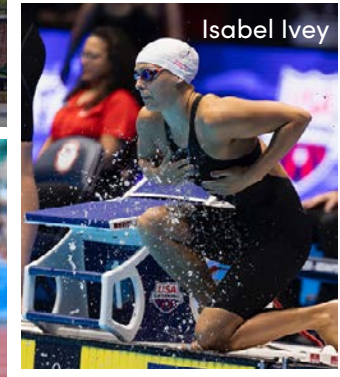
Jessica Woodard



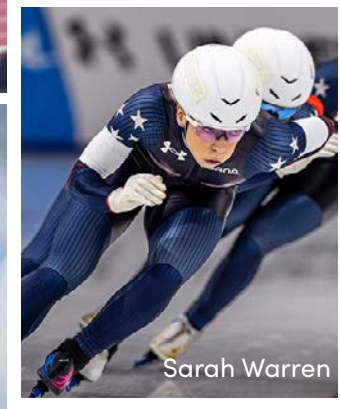
Gabriela Leon



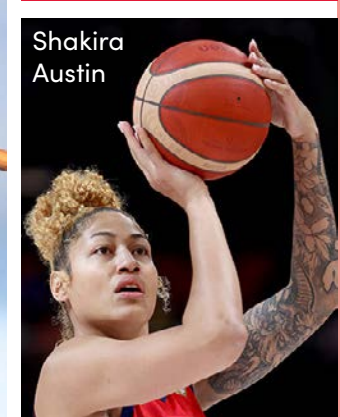
Hope Bravo



Isabel Ivey



Sarah Warren



Shakira Austin

PARTNERSHIPS

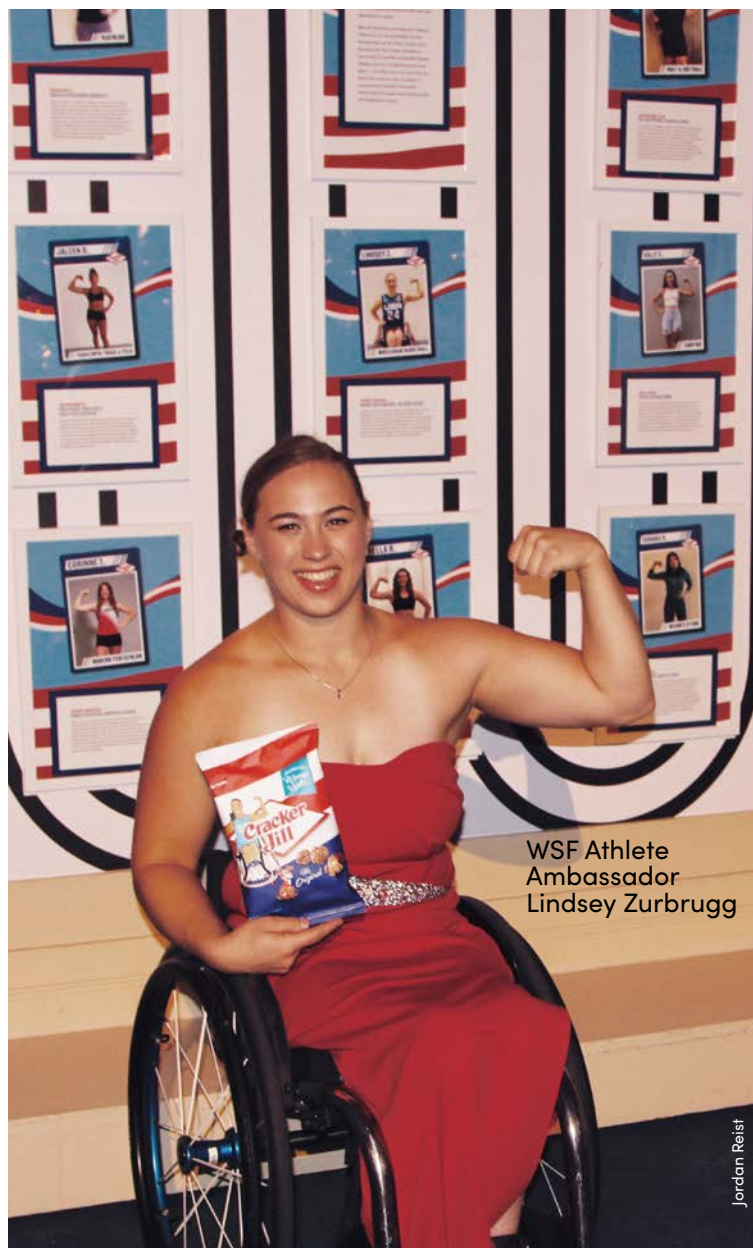
# CRACKER JILL®

Since 2022, WSF has been partnering with the nationally beloved snack brand, PepsiCo Foods' Cracker Jack®, to bring their newest addition, Cracker Jill®, to life; an innovative and fun way to increase representation of girls and women in sports.

Together, WSF and Cracker Jack introduced the exciting new Cracker Jill brand to the public, which featured colorfully-illustrated 'Jills' on select packages in stores and baseball stadiums nationwide. The following year we launched the I Am Cracker Jill Contest®, inviting young women to apply for funding to help make their sports dreams come true. Nine contest winners across sports and across the country were announced, with the grand prize winner, wheelchair basketball athlete Lindsey Zurbrugg, appearing on special-edition Cracker Jill packaging. We also brought the contest winners together in New York City for our "Gallery of the Greats", a co-curated women's sports exhibit featuring WSF memorabilia, to inspire young athletes to keep pursuing their dreams.

Joining the excitement for the biggest global stage in sports, Cracker Jack and WSF continued to elevate the campaign by introducing the Cracker Jill Spotlight Squad – five women athletes participating in five different sports during the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games. The snack's fans touted the Squad's stories on social media during the Games, followed by WSF hosting a virtual panel conversation with Squad members Ashleigh Johnson (Water Polo), Jennifer Lozano (Boxing), Lindsey Zurbrugg (Wheelchair Basketball), and Noelle Lambert (Para Track & Field), that was moderated by WSF President Scout Bassett (Para Track & Field). Girls from WSF community organizations across the country tuned in for an inspirational and illuminating conversation that left them motivated to keep playing!

Our partnership with PepsiCo Foods demonstrates the power of brands and partners working together with WSF to maximize sustainable impact for girls and women in sports and beyond.



WSF Athlete Ambassador Lindsey Zurbrugg

Jordan Reist

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

# COACHING GRANTS

WSF research reports have shined a spotlight on the concerning lack of gender representation in coaching that has prevailed for decades. To help combat this challenge, we are expanding the pipeline for aspiring women coaches and scouts through our Tara VanDerveer Fund and the Scott Pioli & Family Fund. Kelly Cline, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Assistant Defensive Backs Coach, shares that "The Scott Pioli & Family Fund is about more than just providing financial assistance to women coaches and scouts; it's a true commitment to empowering coaches and women in football...this grant has made a significant impact on my work, alleviating financial pressures that once felt overwhelming." These grants provide new opportunities for women coaches and scouts to grow and reach their potential, as Erin Golston, Texas Woman's University Women's Wrestling Graduate Assistant states, "As a [WSF VanDerveer] Fellow, I've had the opportunity to expand my leadership and coaching potential. I aspire to be a strong woman leader in a sport that's predominantly dominated by men. This fellowship will offer me the tools to do just that."



WSF VanDerveer Fellow, Erin Golston

Courtesy of Erin Golston - Texas Woman's University

Being an athlete taught me to push past my comfort zone and be resilient. I can take challenges head-on and trust myself to meet my goals. As a leader, I receive the responsibility with pride and integrity to perform to the best of my ability. What I love the most about sports is learning to be a team player and the diversity of people, skills, and talents. Now as an adult, I teach different generations the importance of movement and how important our body is as a vessel.

- Alyzé, age 25



Courtesy of L.A.C.E.R. Afterschool Programs

## LOOKING AHEAD

**W**e have all seen tremendous progress since the passage of Title IX in 1972, the landmark law that helped pave the way for girls' and women's participation in sports. But progress made does not guarantee progress to come. That is why the Women's Sports Foundation is more committed than ever to the urgency of our mission, to dismantling barriers and demonstrating to society that access, investment, and equality do more than level the playing field for girls and women — they build the leaders of tomorrow.

To help propel our impact further, WSF will build our first-ever endowment to bolster our work for the next 50 years and beyond. We will also fundraise for capacity building and growth, allowing us to expand our reach, further amplify our thought leadership, and create educational programs that ignite dialogue and collaboration across the industry. The monumental moments being seen across women's sports today are not a coincidence; they are a direct result of WSF's legacy of fighting to protect Title IX and our persistent work across the entire sports ecosystem. New issues continue to arise, making WSF's work more important than ever before.

WSF has been changing the game for more than 50 years, and our work is not done yet. It is our hope that with support from friends like you, we can continue to fight for the rights of girls and women throughout the sports ecosystem — and not only kick the door of opportunity open but also hold it to let more girls and women storm through. Because **when girls play, they lead, and we all win!**

“

Every girl who steps onto the field of play is not just competing — she's building a future where women's voices are heard, their strength is celebrated, and their potential is limitless! I am so honored to be a WSF Captain and empower all girls in all sports, because I know from my own experience how powerful sports can be.

— Sophia Herzog-Gibb,  
2x Paralympic medalist,  
WSF Captain

”



# SIGNATURE EVENTS

## Annual Salute to Women in Sports®

The Annual Salute to Women in Sports celebrates the extraordinary achievements of athletes and leaders - and the girls they inspire. It is the Foundation's signature fundraising gala and raises nearly \$2 million annually to support WSF's programs dedicated to strengthening and expanding access and opportunities to sports for all girls and women. Historically, the red carpet, awards show, and star-studded athlete attendees attract Fortune 500 leaders, sports leagues and teams, national governing bodies, philanthropies and media to New York City to gather at the biggest night in women's sports - generating more than 200 million media impressions annually. The generous donors and partners who join us for the Annual Salute have a front row seat to see the impact of their support.

Marileen Moise\_Ceity Images

## Athlete Leadership Connection®

WSF created the Athlete Leadership Connection to provide women athletes with the skills and exposure needed to transition to successful careers after competition. This annual event centers around a full-day of leadership training, providing athletes with skills and resources needed as they shift from competitive sport to professional careers. Held with the support of our national partners, this powerful day impacts and inspires the next generation of women athletes as leaders both on and off the playing field.



Adam Reiser, Dare to Be Films

## National Girls & Women in Sports Day®

A vibrant movement co-founded and powered by WSF, National Girls & Women in Sports Day (NGWSD®) is an annual celebration that honors the confidence, strength and character gained through sports participation. Since its inception, the centerpiece of our annual NGWSD is holding meetings with congressional members and their staff, along with a briefing on Capitol Hill, to discuss key issues impacting girls and women in sport. Beyond the halls of Congress, we also host a girls' event with WSF Athlete Ambassadors, inviting girls from our community partner organizations to participate, while inspiring 300+ grassroots events throughout the country to join us in marking this important day.



Adam Reiser, Dare to Be Films

## WSF Athlete Ambassador Program

The WSF Athlete Ambassador Program, in partnership with Delta Air Lines, connects professional, Olympic, Paralympic and collegiate women athletes and business leaders with youth organizations across the country. These impactful community events inspire girls to keep playing through unique, 'behind-the-scenes' panel conversations with elite athletes and industry role models, and sports clinics that expose girls to new skills that get them active and engaged.



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## The Equity Project® Convenings

As part of WSF's initiative, The Equity Project, the Foundation hosts convenings that aim to unite key advocates, industry leaders, researchers and experts to discuss and address challenges and opportunities for girls and women in sports in sustainable and measurable ways. These convenings use findings and policy recommendations from WSF's research as well as experience and best practices from all levels of sport, to address different topics. Since 2020, we have held 14 convenings and townhalls to discuss important issues including mental health, gender equality for women in coaching, equity for athletes with disabilities and increased access to adaptive sports, and Title IX awareness, education and compliance."



Adam Reiser, Dare to Be Films

## Forbes

### Supportive Sports Environments Reduce Depression And Anxiety In Girls, New Report Shows

Karen Issokson-Silver, Vice President of Research & Education at the Women's Sports Foundation, says this new research illuminates that "environments that are inclusive, welcoming, and create a sense of belonging are enormously supportive of positive mental health."

## WomensHealth

### How Women's Sports Can Transform Our Society For The Better

Today there are 3 million additional high school sport opportunities for girls that didn't exist pre-Title IX, according to the Women's Sports Foundation (WSF), a nonprofit founded by King for which we proudly serve as board members. WSF President, Scout Bassett & WSF Trustee, Gabby Thomas

## Street & Smith's SBJ SPORTS BUSINESS JOURNAL

### Women's Sports Foundation continues to make a difference

Today, the foundation....has donated more than \$100 million to programs that expand athletic opportunities for girls and women. It endeavors to support and connect female athletes of every sport — and every creed and color — through research-informed advocacy, community programs and advocating to protect Title IX.

## REUTERS

### Tennis star King reflects on 50 years of Women's Sports Foundation

"Nothing would be more wonderful than never needing the foundation, but we do need it desperately," said King, who will mark the 50-year anniversary with a Women's Sports Foundation gala in New York on Wednesday.

## USA TODAY

### Sports are a must-have for many girls who grow up to be leaders

According to the Women's Sports Foundation's 'Play to Lead' research, 67 percent of women believe they have carried their skills and lessons from sports into adulthood.

## SUCCESS

### What Caitlin Clark's Starting Salary Says About the State of the Gender Wage Gap

"To ensure pay equity is achieved for the WNBA, as well as across the women's sports landscape, there needs to be significantly increased media coverage of women's sports, high valuation of broadcast media rights, powerful sponsorship investment and consistently packed venues at all levels of the women's sports ecosystem." Danette Leighton, WSF CEO

## JUST WOMEN'S SPORTS

### Women's Sports Foundation Honors 39th Annual National Girls & Women in Sports Day in DC

This National Girls & Women in Sports Day, the Women's Sports Foundation is back in the nation's capital to both celebrate the momentum throughout the women's sports ecosystem and to ensure progress continues, so that all girls and women have a chance to play and reap the lifelong benefits of sport.

## Parents

### The Childhood Hobby Shared by 69% of Women Leaders

The leadership skills and traits that girls get from sports can help build stronger leaders and address inequities in communities and in society more broadly. "Parents need to understand that sports is not a 'nice-to-have' for girls—it's a 'must-have.'" Danette Leighton, WSF CEO

## FRONT OFFICE SPORTS

### Sabrina-Steph Wasn't the 'Battle of the Sexes'—But It Was Part of the Bigger War

Danette Leighton, CEO of the Women's Sports Foundation, believes we have come a long way from Billie Jean King's 'Battle of the Sexes' victory because back then Billie Jean knew her matchup against Bobby Riggs was "much bigger than sport," and the 3-point match-up between Sabrina and Steph proved there is now a "mutual respect between elite athletes."

# OUR TEAM

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WSF Athlete Ambassador Program, Atlanta 2024

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## WE'RE THANKFUL FOR OUR DONORS

**Cory and David Drewes**  
Board Member of Port Washington Youth Activities and Partner of Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP

For Cory and David Drewes, investing in girls' and women's sports is a family affair. Cory, a lifelong athlete, and David, who grew up with sisters involved in sports, "have seen firsthand the positive impact sports can have on girls and women - physically, mentally, and socially." Their two daughters continue the legacy as athletes, creating opportunities for their family to connect through sports.

Their support for the Women's Sports Foundation stems from a deep belief in its work backed by research, education, and advocacy. "We continue to support WSF because we believe in their mission to help girls and women reach their full potential through sports."

Their commitment to empowering the next generation is also reflected in their involvement with Port Washington Youth Activities (PYA) since 2011, with Cory serving on its Board of Directors and joining David in coaching girls' basketball and softball together. Cory's passion for coaching goes beyond x's and o's. "As a woman, coaching is important to me because I feel that visibility and representation matter." Cory also played a key role in launching PYA's volleyball program, alongside their daughters, Anna and Jessi, who recognized the need for a youth volleyball program in their town.



**Kathleen Kunkler**  
Former Senior Vice President and Global Sports & Entertainment Director, Morgan Stanley

A lifelong athlete and champion of women's sports and gender equality, Kathleen Kunkler is also the lead singer of the Kathleen and the One Nite Stand Band. She enjoyed a distinguished 34+ year career in finance, where she was recognized for her ability to ignite passion and drive action. Over the years, Kathleen has remained dedicated to advancing women in sports and empowering girls to break barriers.



Kathleen's connection to the Women's Sports Foundation began at age 14 when, inspired by Billie Jean King's groundbreaking career, she subscribed to WSF's magazine at the time. Her commitment to the cause continues today as a member of WSF's Board of Trustees.

Kathleen believes that sport participation does more than provide opportunities, it creates lasting societal change. As a loyal, annual donor and member of the Champions Legacy Circle - people who have designated the Foundation as a beneficiary in their estate plans - she continues to support WSF, helping to empower young women and contribute to a ripple effect that benefits society.

**Maddy Gonzalez**  
Account Executive, Canva

Former center forward for the professional soccer club FH Ingar, Maddy Gonzalez has been deeply shaped by her participation in sports. Whether she was going toe-to-toe with her older sister growing up or practicing with the boy's team in grade school, Maddy loved the competition. Even at times when her family struggled to meet the financial needs, her club team stepped in to ensure that she could continue to compete. "That unwavering support changed my life forever. Soccer made me feel confident, empowering me to realize my true potential."



With her professional days behind her, Maddy looked for a new challenge that would allow her to pay it forward and came across WSF's Charity Partner team for the TCS New York City Marathon. For a guaranteed entry to run this renown marathon - her first-ever - Maddy committed to fundraising \$5,000 to support WSF's work to empower girls and women to play, compete and lead. "Sports should be accessible to everyone; they can provide pathways to college, jobs, and even life-long friendships. Sports enable girls to achieve goals beyond their wildest dreams!" WSF was delighted to cheer on Maddy as she ran the 26.2 miles and crossed the finish line in Central Park.

We are grateful to the following individuals and institutions who supported our work between July 1, 2023 and March 31, 2025.

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“

I feel like sports have guided me to becoming a better leader all around. I am the team captain of my volleyball team and I am heavily involved with my high school basketball as well. Sports have taught me how to go out of my comfort zone and to be flexible in trying things that I normally wouldn't.

– Ashlyn, age 16

”

“

After 20 years, I continue to have the honor to serve the Women's Sports Foundation as an ambassador and support its mission to help girls and women realize their full potential. Their work aligns with my passion to create opportunities for the next generation, and I am grateful to be part of such a trailblazing organization.

– Jessica Mendoza,  
2x Olympic medalist,  
WSF Captain and Past  
President

”

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Playing sports from a young age influenced my entire future. Sports truly shaped me into the person I am today and provided me with a pathway to my future. I have never been more grateful for the opportunities I have been provided, the stereotypes I broke, and the chances I took to get where I am today.

– Carly, age 25

”

“

The support I received from WSF 34 years ago, as a senior co-captain of William & Mary’s women’s basketball team, helped change history. When our team was told it would be terminated due to budget cuts, while the men’s team was headed to Hawaii, WSF connected me with an experienced Title IX attorney who helped us get our program reinstated. Fast forward to 2025, the William & Mary women’s basketball team played in their first ever NCAA tournament – an accomplishment the men’s team has not yet achieved. Thank you WSF, for helping clear the path for girls and women in sports.

– Angie Evans Romano, former Athletic Director, Coach and School Administrator for Stone Ridge School

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Playing sports taught me about my ability to persevere, to rely on my teammates, to overcome setbacks and injury, and to dedicate myself to a goal as we worked daily toward accomplishing it. Balancing regular practice times with my classes, labs, meals and schoolwork helped me develop time management and self-care skills that I've carried into adulthood. As a wellness entrepreneur now, I recognize how vital it is to keep growing girls' confidence and life skills through sport.

– Kristen, age 39

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“  
 Playing sports has  
 been a foundational  
 structure in my life. I  
 competed throughout  
 my childhood which  
 led to my playing  
 Division I basketball.  
 Sports taught me  
 structure, discipline,  
 teamwork and  
 individual work, and  
 how to follow through  
 with what you  
 start. I use the same  
 foundational theories  
 and practices today, in  
 my work in the legal  
 field.

– Nyoki, age 44

”

“

The Women’s Sports Foundation’s commitment to providing access and opportunity to all girls and women, from all sports, all backgrounds and of all abilities, is what excites me! I am proud of the work WSF has accomplished over the past 50 years and I look forward to continuing to advocate and push boundaries for women in sport.

– Elana Meyers Taylor,  
5x Olympic medalist,  
WSF Captain and Past  
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“  
In sports, you have to work as a cohesive unit, understand everyone’s strengths, and strive toward a common goal. The same applies in business leadership – creating a winning team culture, ensuring everyone is aligned, and pushing through challenges together. Sports also taught me discipline and the ability to stay focused, which are crucial when navigating the complexities of running a business. Ultimately, my athletic background instilled in me a sense of determination and a never-give-up attitude that continues to drive my approach to leadership and life.

– Ellie, age 56

”

“

Sports taught me: teamwork, patience, belief in momentum, the power of optimism, how consistency reaps rewards, the normality of ups and downs, trust in others, humility, and how to be a mentor. Sports also proved to me that magical outcomes are possible. I'm so grateful for Title IX and all the women who paved the way for me.

– Sarah, age 55

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In exchange for a guaranteed entry to the 2024 TCS New York City Marathon, these individuals committed to fundraising \$5,000 each in support of our work. On Sunday, November 3, 2024, they participated in the world's largest marathon ever with over 55,000 total finishers.

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Delia Hayes  
Kat Heaney  
Kristen Hollingshaus  
Kayla Holmes  
Sydney Johnson  
Emily Lanter  
Paige Lawrence  
Shannon Li  
Olivia Lynch  
Megan Macias  
Taylor McClung  
Brigette McGuire  
Dan Meyer  
Maeve O'Connor

Mac Purvis  
Stephanie Redfern  
Anne Rehfuss  
Ana Rincon  
Jessie Robinson  
Reagan Rust  
Campbell Salmon  
Jenn San Pedro  
Corey Scult  
Parker Sizemore  
Rachel Sun  
Margot Thistle  
Amanda Turak  
Marisa Van Sickle  
Josh Veltrie  
Jeff Van Buren  
Hudson Van Slooten  
Taylor Wade  
Kellie Walters  
Caroline Williams  
Grace Yawman  
Lindsay Zizumbo

For more information about the TCS New York City Marathon and Charity Partner Program, please contact Demi McClung, Manager, Development, 646.813.7239, DMcClung@WomensSportsFoundation.org



## Champions Legacy Circle

WSF's Champions Legacy Circle consists of individuals who have designated the Women's Sports Foundation as a beneficiary in their will, trust, or estate plans or via a charitable remainder trust.

The individuals listed below have given us permission to list their names as members of this vital group of donors. We are grateful to them for helping to ensure that future generations of girls will get a chance to discover their inner athlete and use sport as a springboard in life.

Karen Ansis  
Eva Auchincloss  
Jane Betts  
Cyndi Blaschak  
Betsy Bombeck  
Margaret Chase  
Carol L. Christensen  
Andra Christine Douglas  
Linda Driscoll  
Susan Enquist  
Melodi Ford  
Beverly Johnson  
Billie Jean King  
Ilana Kloss  
Ellen Kreighbaum  
Kathleen Kunkler  
Nona M. Lee  
Dr. Luella J. Lilly  
Ted Meekma and Heather Dunhill  
Kim Messner and Terri Treese  
Darla Moldenhauer  
Janet L. Nicoll and Venita C. Christy  
Dr. Carole Oglesby  
Kathryn E. Olson  
Joan Parker  
Dr. Cecile Reynaud  
Dr. Marjorie Snyder  
Dr. Beverly Jene Stunden  
Judith Sweet

Karen Tessmer  
Jack Thiel - In Memory of Dee Geckler  
Lisa R. Thuer-Winkelfoos  
Stephanie Tolleson  
Holly Turner  
Sandra Vivas and Bridget Belgiovine  
Chris Voelz and Fran Nocella  
Madeline and Lawrence Weinstein  
Charlotte West  
3 Anonymous Members

For information about planned giving and joining the Champions Legacy Circle, please contact Lisa R. Thuer-Winkelfoos, Director of Development at 314.795.1346 LThuer@WomensSportsFoundation.org

# FINANCIALS (Per IRS 990)

REVENUES	FY2024	FY2023	FY2022
Individual contributions	\$7,966,288	\$1,484,052	\$1,254,078
Corporate contributions	2,597,166	4,081,221	4,474,386
Foundation contributions and grants	2,245,283	212,916	692,484
Government funding	-	-	227,542
Special events, net	1,847,498	1,781,034	1,709,608
Investment income (loss), net	322,403	88,759	118,364
Others	23,090	3,422	41,198
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$15,001,728</b>	<b>\$7,651,405</b>	<b>\$8,517,660</b>

EXPENSES	FY2024	FY2023	FY2022
<b>Program Services</b>			
Advocacy	1,573,902	1,511,315	1,324,131
Community impact	3,155,806	2,594,076	3,198,087
Research	907,097	755,284	562,079
<i>Total program services</i>	<i>5,636,805</i>	<i>4,860,675</i>	<i>5,084,297</i>
Management and general	679,596	645,544	643,780
Fundraising	1,141,463	1,052,520	887,105
<i>Total supporting services</i>	<i>1,821,059</i>	<i>1,698,064</i>	<i>1,530,885</i>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$7,457,864</b>	<b>\$6,558,739</b>	<b>\$6,615,182</b>

## CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

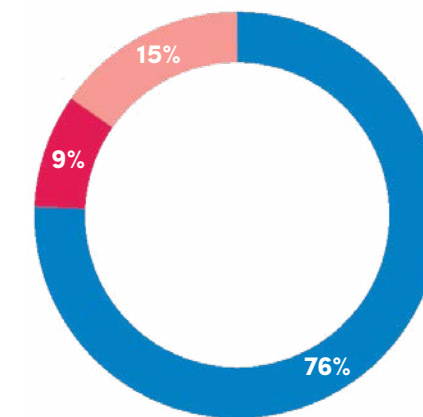
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	8,887,227	7,608,580	6,116,621
Net unrealized gains (losses) on investments	71,990	185,982	(410,519)

## NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR

**\$16,503,081\***    **\$8,887,227**    **\$7,608,580**

(\*) Significant increase in net assets in 2024 is in large part due to donations made towards newly established endowment and capacity building needs of the Foundation.

## FY2024 - FUNCTIONAL EXPENSE ALLOCATION



- Program Services: Advocacy, Community Impact and Research
- Management and General
- Fundraising



WSF is an accredited charity of the BBB Wise Giving Alliance.

WSF Athlete Ambassador Program, Atlanta 2024



## MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### Donate to WSF

Whether making a gift of cash, stock, or cryptocurrency, or donating through an IRA retirement plan or Donor Advised Fund – all gifts help to provide opportunities for all girls and women to play sports. And you can make your gift count twice with a match from your employer.

### Join Our Champions Legacy Circle

Support our fight for equality well into the future by naming the Women's Sports Foundation in your will, living trust, retirement plan, or other estate plan.

### Be an Advocate

Sign up for The Equity Project® newsletter and watch for our "Take Action Tuesday" postings on social media. Make your voice heard by signing a letter or petition. Ask your local news outlet to increase their coverage of girls' and women's sports.

### Influence Public Policy

Call your legislator and urge them to keep Title IX strong and support safe and inclusive access to sports opportunities.

### Become a Corporate Supporter

Collaborate with WSF to maximize impact and increase engagement through marketing campaigns, community programs and beneficiary donations.

## GET INVOLVED

### Fundraise with Us

There is no better way to celebrate a milestone than by giving back. Whether it's a birthday, anniversary, or holiday, set up a celebratory campaign and urge friends to give back. Add an additional challenge by organizing a race, walk, sporting event, or watch party!

### Apply for a Grant

Check out our range of grant programs on our website: Sports 4 Life grants for community organizations keeping girls in the game; Travel & Training Fund, Scout Bassett Grant, and Athlete Recovery and Care Commitment Grant for athletes; and Tara VanDerveer and Scott Pioli & Family Funds aimed at aspiring coaches and scouts.

### Attend an Event

From National Girls & Women in Sports Day® in February, to the Annual Salute to Women in Sports® awards gala in October – join us! Sign up for our newsletter to receive updates on events in your area.

### Share your Story

Spread the word about WSF, connect with us on social media, and share what sport means to you. Be sure to tag us – we simply cannot do what we do without advocates like you!

### Contact Us

#### Visit:

[WomensSportsFoundation.org](https://WomensSportsFoundation.org)

#### Email:

[Info@WomensSportsFoundation.org](mailto:Info@WomensSportsFoundation.org)

#### Call:

800.227.3988

#### Sources for Did You Know:

- <sup>1</sup> The Women & Girls Index, 2023, IUPUI Women's Philanthropy Institute
- <sup>2</sup> National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), 2024
- <sup>3</sup> NFHS, 2024
- <sup>4</sup> NCAA Demographics Database, 2024
- <sup>5</sup> NFHS, 2024
- <sup>6</sup> Government Accountability Office, 2024
- <sup>7</sup> NCAA Demographics Database, 2024 and Acosta & Carpenter, 2014
- <sup>8</sup> WSF's Thriving Through Sport: The Transformative Impact on Girls' Mental Health, 2024
- <sup>9,10</sup> WSF's Play to Lead: The Generational Impact of Sport on Women's Leadership, 2024

# #PlayToLead



Find us here: Women's Sports Foundation  
247 West 30th Street, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10001  
WomensSportsFoundation.org

Keep being inspired        

