



Giving LACROSSE

NORTHEAST REGION

FUEL THE GROWTH ★ ENRICH THE EXPERIENCE ★ FIELD THE BEST NATIONAL TEAMS

Valley Lacrosse and USA Lacrosse Team Up for New Opportunities

BY DYLAN BUTLER AND PAUL OHANIAN

THE SYRACUSE AREA IS NO STRANGER to great lacrosse. Working together with the Onondaga Valley Lacrosse Association – known simply as Valley Lacrosse, USA Lacrosse is helping to ensure even more young players in the region have a chance to chase greatness on the field.

Walt Eccles, who has witnessed some of the sport’s biggest moments while watching Syracuse University men’s and women’s lacrosse games, helps to run Valley Lacrosse, a low-cost organization for children in grades 3-8 that participate in the Upstate Lacrosse Association — a league that since 1994 has served communities in central New York with a focus on instruction and athlete development.

Eccles worked with USA Lacrosse to bring a Sankofa Clinic to the area in 2021, giving 100 players a chance to learn more about the sport. He followed up with a Pick Up & Play event in 2022 as part of National Celebrate Lacrosse Week.

The Pick Up & Play event was another outreach opportunity coordinated by Eccles and Valley Lacrosse leadership as they try to reinvigorate the sport among Syracuse’s city residents. With a school district that has nearly 20,000 students (K-12), Eccles says that there is just one boys’ and one girls’ high school team.

“The numbers aren’t where we want them to be, and there are a lot of different factors that have changed things through the years,” he said. “The city’s lacrosse numbers used to be much more vibrant.”

To reach those students, Valley Lacrosse promoted last year’s Pick Up and Play clinic throughout the school



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system, utilizing flyers and emails to spread the word about the free event.

Initial returns have been favorable.

“Everyone that talked to me after the clinic said that it was great,” Eccles said. “We did a follow-up with the kids that participated to get them connected to a team or another clinic in the spring. We want them to feel like this is a fun thing to be doing.”

The momentum will keep rolling in 2023 as Valley Lacrosse will hold another Pick Up & Play event in November, one of nearly 100 such events around the country during this year’s National Celebrate Lacrosse Week from Nov. 4-12.

“To me, those are the things you need to grow the game,” Eccles said. “You’re saying to people, ‘There are no barriers to you trying this. All you need to do is show up at this location...we’re going to give you an opportunity to keep on playing.’ That to me is a real game-grower.”

- ▶ The USA Lacrosse Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that serves as the philanthropic arm of USA Lacrosse. The Foundation helps drive the three main pillars of the USA Lacrosse mission: 1) Fuel the growth; 2) Enrich the experience; 3) Field the best national teams. Supporting the foundation provides thousands of children across the country the opportunity to experience the gift of lacrosse. To learn more about the USA Lacrosse Foundation, please visit usalacrosse.com/foundation

National Scope, LOCAL IMPACT

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Each year, USA Lacrosse receives hundreds of applications for grants designed to **Fuel the Growth** of the game. Grants are available for equipment, player clinics and financial support. The USA Lacrosse Foundation is committed to raising the dollars needed to fund as many of these grants as possible. Philanthropic support from members, partners, and friends is critical in providing these opportunities for players, coaches, and officials in every region across the country.

The **Northeast** region includes **New York (excluding NYC & Long Island)** and **Central and Eastern Pennsylvania**. Applications received during the 2023 grant cycle are currently being reviewed with award notifications going out later this year, which means there's still time to invest in the growth of the game in your own backyard!

Here is breakdown of the applications submitted from your region:

17

Total Applications

11

Equipment Grants

3

Player Clinic Grants

3

Financial Grants

\$48,475

Total Retail Revenue

115

Total Girls Impacted

255

Total Boys Impacted



Being the 2022 recipient of USA Lacrosse's Diversity Grant is an immense honor. While we may be a small nonprofit, our mission carries significant weight as we strive to educate mainstream lacrosse enthusiasts about inclusion in the sport and provide meaningful opportunities for volunteers to connect with the extraordinary special needs community."

VANESSA DIAS

Able Lacrosse – Scarsdale, NY