



Giving LACROSSE

SOUTHEAST REGION

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

USA Lacrosse Equipment Grant Helps Launch Aiken High School Program

BY PAUL OHANIAN

PHILLIP BLACHA NEVER PLAYED LACROSSE, but as a fan, he just knew that if he could get teams started at Aiken (S.C.) High School, where he serves as athletics director, his athletes would quickly take to the sport.

Unfortunately, Blacha faced the same obstacle as many others; the start-up costs associated with lacrosse. Seeking to supplement the school district's funding and the money raised through fundraisers, Blacha applied for a USA Lacrosse equipment grant in 2021. To his surprise, Aiken received a boys' team grant, providing full equipment for 24 players.

"Our school has quite a varied population, with some very rich families and some very poor families," Blacha noted. "We didn't want some kids to be turned away because of the cost of equipment."

After launching its first team with 21 boys in 2022, Aiken's roster grew to 30 boys during the 2023 season. The school also started a girls' team in 2022, which Blacha coaches. Between the two teams, there are almost

60 players participating.

"We truly could not have had a season and provided our student-athletes with this amazing opportunity if it wasn't for this grant," Blacha said. "It was so impactful that we fielded a girls' program as well."

USA Lacrosse grants are intended to support community partners that create participation opportunities and break-down the barriers to participation. USA Lacrosse grants are typically provided in three categories: equipment grants, player clinic grants, and financial support.

Blacha notes that both the boys and girls squads at Aiken High School made strong progress from season one to season two, with no end in sight.

"Our kids just want to stay involved with lacrosse and keep playing the game," Blacha said. "Once our boys and girls start playing, they fall in love with it. We were beyond thankful to receive this grant, because without it, we wouldn't be able to have a team. We have become the most popular sport in the area."

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- ▶ 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 **Southeast** region includes **Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.** 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:

53

Total Applications

42

Equipment Grants

6

Player Clinic Grants

5

Financial Grants

\$158,805

Total Retail Revenue

458

Total Girls Impacted

768

Total Boys Impacted



As a first-year program, only four of our players had any equipment at all at the beginning of the season. This grant bridged the equipment gap for many of our players, and we cannot say thank you enough! We are so excited to continue to grow this program, and can't wait to see where we are able to go from here!"

LIZZIE SWARTZ

Independence High School
Thompson's Station, TN