



Giving LACROSSE

SOUTHWEST REGION

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

Growth, Opportunities Through USA Lacrosse's Urban Lacrosse Alliance

BY PAUL OHANIAN

ROBERSON MIDDLE SCHOOL in Houston, Texas is not your typical public school.

As a "school of choice" in the Spring Independent School District, students must submit an application, pass an audition/interview, and have teacher recommendations just to be considered. Those who meet the requirements are then entered into a lottery.

Serving students in grades 6-8 with a rigorous academic curriculum, the non-traditional school averages about 850 fifth-grade applicants annually, each hoping to secure one of the 300 available slots. The majority of the school's student population is Hispanic and Black.

Against this background, Roberson has not traditionally offered many options in athletics. In fact, for many years, its only competitive teams were wrestling and soccer.

It was in 2016 when Ernest Webb, a physical education and health teacher at the school, recognized the need for another sports activity for students.

"These are smart kids, but they are also regular kids who need an outlet," Webb said. "And I'm always trying to help them realize there's more than just football, soccer and basketball as options."

Webb figured that lacrosse, with Native American roots, would be the right offering. In addition to learning the skills of the game, players would also have the opportunity to develop a fuller understanding of Native culture.

An initial grant provided by the JJ Watt Foundation helped to get both a boys' team started in 2017 and girls'



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team established the following year.

Needing further support, Webb applied for and received a USA Lacrosse grant in 2017. The equipment and resources allowed Roberson's teams to begin competitive play against boys' opponents in the Greater Houston Youth Lacrosse Association and against girls' teams in the Greater Houston Girls' Lacrosse Association.

"Our kids want to compete and play against other teams," Webb said. "They are really passionate about lacrosse."

But with over 40 players on both the boys' and girls' teams, there was still a gap in meeting the needs of Roberson's teams. That brought Webb back to USA Lacrosse to become a member of the organization's Urban Lacrosse Alliance (ULA), which provides annual education, equipment, and funding to support self-sustaining programs in urban communities.

"USA Lacrosse has been critical to our program," Webb said. "The organization has done a great job of helping to equip us through the years."

The equipment package option offered through the Urban Lacrosse Alliance provided sticks, cleats, helmets, uniforms, and goggles.

"This grant made it easier for all the kids to have everything they needed," Webb said. "It made a big difference for us."

- ▶ 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 **Southwest** region includes **Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma,** and **Texas**. 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:

38

Total Applications

29

Equipment Grants

3

Player Clinic Grants

6

Financial Grants

\$96,430

Total Retail Revenue

365

Total Girls Impacted

490

Total Boys Impacted



With this award, B.R.E.A.T.H.E. Athletics has been able to reach the underprivileged youth and open their worlds to different opportunities in learning and experiences beyond what they see daily in their neighborhood.”

KEISHA HESTER

B.R.E.A.T.H.E. Athletics – Spring, TX