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Starfinder 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

Philadelphia, PA – Today, the Women's Sports Foundation and espnW, in collaboration with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, announced Starfinder Foundation 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 and ESPN Business Operations & Content Strategy. "This program demonstrates the universal value and 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, Starfinder 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.

"Thank you, Women's Sports Foundation!" said Heidi Warren, Executive Director of Starfinder. "The Sports 4 Life grant will help us give our girls more opportunities to compete in a spring soccer league, and practice both their soccer and their leadership skills. We'll continue to support them with high quality coaching, academic support, mentoring, and a life skills curriculum, but nothing beats the learning opportunities (and confidence boost) of competitive play."

Meet all the 2018 Sport 4 Life grant recipients and learn more about them [here](#).

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About Starfinder

Starfinder Foundation is a Philadelphia, Pennsylvania based youth development organization utilizing soccer to engage low-income youth to engage and foster their bodies, brains, and budding leadership skills to develop strong and healthy individuals. Starfinder's mission is to enhance the personal growth of underserved youth through soccer and learning experiences that engage, inspire, and motivate.

Since its founding in 2002, Starfinder's programs have equipped over 9,000 youth from underserved communities with the tools they need to achieve success both on and off the field. Soccer is the hook; success in school, in the community, and in the pursuit of higher education is the goal.

www.starfinderfoundation.com<<http://www.starfinderfoundation.com>>

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