We’ve been showing off your shiny new headquarters a lot lately. We’ve welcomed old timers (those who still call it the Hall of Fame, you know who you are!), players visiting the locker rooms or playing on Tierney Field, former players reminiscing about the game they were a part of, and neighbors stopping by for a game and look around. They are giddy and overwhelmed. And they are confused.

We’ve been asked a lot: What is it you all do here? The answers are varied and complex, but the bottom line is this: we champion the child through lacrosse. We steward the money, time, talent and resources you’ve donated to US Lacrosse to champion the social, physical, emotional and educational well-being of the child.

**THIS IS WHO YOU’VE CHAMPIONED:**

**The children standing on the sidelines, waiting their turn.** Your investment led to the development and deployment of an athlete development model that stresses the right lacrosse at the right time, skill progression, cognitive preparedness, small-sided play, constant movement, active participation and loads of fun. Your donor dollars are advancing this model to keep children engaged in the sport in youth leagues around the country. Thank you.

**The children who do not have access to lacrosse.** It’s no secret that lacrosse can be very expensive, require large spaces, and unavailable in under-served communities. Parents struggle to provide equipment for children; through First Stick, kids get sticks. Programs struggle to find regulation field space; through the Athlete Development Model, the game is modified to fit existing spaces. Leagues struggle to maintain adequate numbers; through PE Lacrosse Workshops, K-12 physical education teachers learn how to teach lacrosse in schools through district-wide training and receive free soft-stick equipment for their school. Physically disabled children are unable to participate; through adaptive lacrosse programs, this becomes possible. All of these programs give kids who want to play the opportunity to play. Thank you.

**The coaches and officials who want to positively influence the next generation.** Education, training, mentoring, workshops, online resources and background checks strive to put the most qualified, nurturing and responsible adults in front of the child to ensure that the experience is a rewarding one. This is critical to the growth of the game and the spirit of lacrosse. Thank you.

**The players who represent the United States on the world’s stage.** The members of Team USA are inspirational role models and ardent ambassadors for lacrosse. They stand for the ideals of lacrosse with unwavering character, proving that hustle and heart can set you apart. Thank you.

**Those who believe in the preservation of culture and promotion of character.** Spirit of lacrosse, sportsmanship, honor, integrity, traditions, teamwork and community are all values to be cultivated for children on and off the field through the Keeper Project. Thank you.

Your contribution to US Lacrosse endorses the programs, services and principles of lacrosse that affect the welfare of the child, benefitting thousands of children. You are the real champion.
If you want to understand how your support of US Lacrosse has transformed the lives of children across America, look no further than the essay by Hollywood Hills (FL) high school senior and four-year varsity player, Moy-Lyn Chen, on the centerspread. How did you champion Moy-Lyn and her teammates? Let me count just three of the ways.

First, you have helped to make possible the 67 chapters across the country that serve as US Lacrosse’s “boots on the ground.” Chapter volunteers are critical to identifying and providing the assets needed to build and sustain the sport in their areas. Back in 2013, two incredible volunteers from the South Florida chapter, Donna and Bob Rose, recognized that Hollywood Hills would be an ideal place to start a girls high school lacrosse team.

Which brings us to the second way—US Lacrosse’s First Stick Program. Without generous donors, First Stick would not have been able to foster nearly 600 first-year teams over the past five years. Donna and Bob submitted an online grant request, and US Lacrosse chose Hollywood Hills as a recipient of equipment, coach training and other developmental support. Your support of the First Stick Program allowed them to begin play in Spring 2014, Moy-Lyn’s freshman year.

Third is our emerging Urban Lacrosse Alliance. Created in 2014, the ULA supports US Lacrosse’s strategic goal of increasing diversity and inclusion within the game. With 41 current members—including Hollywood Hills High School—the ULA provides sustaining support, including sticks, uniforms, cleats, subsidized officials fees, tournament registration fees, and more. There are more ways, of course. You may never meet Moy-Lyn, but the gratitude she demonstrates in her essay is unmistakable. On behalf of Moy-Lyn and all of us at US Lacrosse, thank you!
THE BOND IN
BEING DIFFERENT

Moy-Lyn Chen, a high school senior at Hollywood Hills (FL) High School and a four-year member of the varsity lacrosse team, began playing the game as a 9th-grader when lacrosse was introduced at her school. She is now one of five original players who have helped to build the program’s foundation over four years on varsity. In her free time, she volunteers as an assistant with the lacrosse team at a local middle school. She is planning on playing in college next year. Aside from lacrosse, she is a member of the National Honor Society, an ambassador of the National Society of High School Scholars, a Cadet Captain, a Mathlete, and the S-4 (the Logistics Specialist) of Hollywood Hills Military Academy. “I will be pursuing a degree in occupational therapy at Methodist University and working hard to move my lacrosse game to the next level!” Chen said.

Chen shares how the diversity of her team and inclusion of all players made your lacrosse experience better.

I began playing lacrosse in my freshman year of high school and to say the least, it was rough. Our team had twelve first time lacrosse players standing on a field preparing to play a sport that most of us had never existed because of Teen Wolf. Looking back to my ninth grade year, I am not the same person I was when I walked out on that field. Now that I am a senior, I really have pushed past racial stereotypes to prove our skill and self-worth.

When we first began playing, our team heard it all. We were told we were losers and called “the equal opportunity team”. However, from the onset we formed a bond in being different. My lacrosse team is composed of people with Mexican, Puerto Rican, Italian, Colombian, Vietnamese, Cuban, Dominican, Haitian, Dominican, Bahamian, Russian, Peruvian, Iranian, Cherokee, Nicaraguan, Caulacian, Jamaican, West Indian, and Chinese backgrounds. Many people are under the impression that lacrosse is a “white” sport and that made some of us unsure of our place on the team. However, when we all came together no one was worried about being different or not fitting in because we were all unique in our own way. As a team we have a family like bond that is unbreakable even in the face of adversity.

On the other hand, our diverse backgrounds mean we have to adjust to the strong cultural influences on the team such as our running on “Island Time.” Island Time is a make.

timed system where late is on time, on time is early, and early doesn’t exist. Anyone knows that lacrosse knows that this never works for a team.

Lacrosse was the first time in my life that I actually felt a part of something bigger than myself and people just like me. People who could finally say that lacrosse made them feel like they belonged to something bigger than themselves. This sport didn’t restrict players by race or ethnicity. It creates opportunity for players all over the world - just like me. Being around such a diverse group of individuals while playing the sport I love taught me how to lose gracefully before I learned to win humbly. I learned that quitting is the only true failure, and giving it your all can change your life.

You’ve got mail

TO PROTECT AND HEAL

Scott Menoher, a coach at Jack Britz High School in Fayetteville, N.C., grew up playing lacrosse in Colorado. An only child from a single-parent household, lacrosse gave him an outlet to pour himself into. Menoher initially played at the MCLA level at Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, but eventually found his way to the University of Denver where he discovered his passion for coaching. As a member of the military who has been deployed in support of combat forces 16 times since 9/11, he now takes great pride in working with players who are also members of military families.

“My greatest accomplishment has been working with the sons and daughters of soldiers and families who serve,” Menoher said. “They are a special breed and have earned a rightful place in my heart.”

He dedicated this essay to those players and families.

We are the 1%, though you can’t tell us apart by our race or creed. Some of us are first generation immigrants, some of our ancestors walked off the Mayflower, and others may have been there to greet them. We come from every walk of life, and yet have one thing in common – we serve.

You see our parents and siblings are the men and women who stand watch over our great nation. They are green and blue, they are red and white. They go forward and keep America safe while we wait at home.

We know diversity in all its forms – because we are equal on its most fundamental level. We know fear and grief, pride and humility, hope and suffering. Loss and redemption are a part of our vocabulary like no other.

We are a brother and sisterhood that is united on an epic scale. A nod, a shrug, a shudder, the unspoken word or tear. Color and class mean nothing to us because we are tied together in so many more and powerful ways.

They call lacrosse the Creator’s Game – and we embrace it as such. For us it is both a shield and inclusion of all players made your lacrosse experience better.

I am very excited to be going to Roc E6’s first college graduation ceremony. London Booker went to our very first camp when he was in 5th grade and now is graduating from Roberts Wesleyan College, where he played lacrosse for four years and will deliver a speech at graduation. This is a picture of his senior night at Roberts. Now I get to take a picture of him walking across the stage getting his diploma.

London started coaching for Roc E6 when he was in 7th grade because after graduating from our program in 6th grade, he had no place to play in the city of Rochester. When he was in 10th grade his mother moved out of the city so he could play lacrosse. He never stopped coaching even while playing high school and college lacrosse. This note is his inspiration.

London found a way to do something about that. He was just named the modified lacrosse coach at Douglas, the same school he had to leave in order to continue playing lacrosse. Full circle.

US Lacrosse played a big part in helping Roc E6 introduce and excite the kids in the City of Rochester to the point of having so many young kids playing that they now have teams in the city. The Rochester City School District Spring Sport will have two modified teams, two Junior Varsity teams and a pilot Varsity team.

This is why we coach.

Arthur Alvut, Fairport, NY

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Leadership comes in many forms. For Kellen Kruglewicz, a Ridgeview (GA) Charter School student and STAR (Students That Act Responsibly) player for Atlanta Youth Lacrosse, it is in the form of a zealous 13-year-old leading in an intentional effort to help others. APIVEO – Always Play IV Each Other – is an organization dedicated to teaching kids about leadership and character through youth sports. Each month, the APIVEO Player of the Month Award, sponsored by Zaxby’s, honors a youth athlete who demonstrates leadership through service on his team or community. The January recipient was Kruglewicz for devoting his spare time to coaching the younger players in the Atlanta Youth Lacrosse program and officiating their games. His desire and dedication to teaching lacrosse and serving the younger players is a tremendous demonstration of leadership.

APIVEO and Zaxby’s provide the recipient with a check for $1,000 to be donated to a charity of choice that benefits kids. Kruglewicz selected the First Stick Program for its shared passion for supporting young kids and helping them get involved in lacrosse. He’s eager to pass on his love of lacrosse and the lessons he has learned playing team sports.

“Youcrosse is a unique outlet unlike anything I’ve ever experienced. The brotherhood in the lacrosse community is impeccable. Everyone shares a great passion for the game,” said Kruglewicz. “Lacrosse is a mind over matter game. It brings together such a select but diverse group of individuals willing to commit and inspire others by sharing our gifts to fund future generations to play this great game. We, as lacrosse players, are blessed to be able to play.”

Leadership can be seen in a single act of kindness or an ongoing effort that benefits others. If you are Kellen Kruglewicz, it is both.

**YOU NEVER KNOW**

Sometimes you don’t realize the impact of someone’s kindness until later in life, when you reflect upon the people who have helped you along the way. Hopefully, you get the chance to let them know before it’s too late.

We were touched to receive a donation from Andy Oleksi this past fall with the box checked “give kids their first sticks and opportunities to play” in memory of National Lacrosse Hall of Famer Stanley “Stas” Kowalski. A note stated “he gave me mine in 1965”.

Although the very athletic Oleksi never played lacrosse in high school, he and Kowalski played together at Cortland State where they both developed a real love and passion for the game.

From there, Oleksi is credited with starting the Lincoln-Sudbury (MA) High School boys lacrosse team in 1970, coaching and remaining involved with the highly reputable program for 33 years. The players, coaches, All-Americans and lacrosse pioneers to come out of Lincoln-Sudbury are too many to mention. It all started with a donated stick. Pass the game on. You never know.

**LITTLE LAXERS, BIG HELPERS**

They may be little, but they are mighty. Jason Rigoli likes to keep the girls of his Arlington (VA) Youth Lacrosse Club program community-service-oriented, so he worked with his daughters and their teammates to build a summer program that would have a powerful impact on growing the game and keeping their sticks fresh over the summer months.

“Joanna Lignelli, a US Lacrosse certified trainer, was running the Level 2 Coaching Clinic at the US Lacrosse Convention, and we were trading best practices on how to keep the girls active over the summer. She mentioned ‘homework sheets’ with wall ball, partner passing, etc. coupled with an incentive,” said Rigoli. “I wanted a twist; however, to make it about the girls improving themselves and the lives of others.”

The plan was straightforward: the players had to round up enough donated lacrosse equipment to field a 3rd and 4th grade girls team, put in two hours per month of lacrosse training at home, get their homework sheets signed by their parents, and – the twist – help run a Winners Lacrosse Clinic for 3rd and 4th grade girls in Anacostia Park in inter-city DC. Winners is a non-profit with a mission to grow the game while using lacrosse to teach life lessons. If all of this, each girl would earn a new STX stick (actually paid for by their parents).”

“The girls donated dozens of sticks, portable goals and creases, balls, and a $250 check from AYLCl to Winnie’s Nest. It was really cold but the clinic went well! Everyone had a ton of fun as the girls helped each other master skills. I couldn’t be more proud of these little laxers. Every girl did her part to help,” said Rigoli.

Everyone is a winner when you build lacrosse communities together to champion the child.

**CHAMPION YOUR INNER CHILD**

Wednesday nights are for the boys. At least from November through February, they are for this group of “boys”. They call themselves “Old Timers Lac”, which seems appropriate since the median age for the players is 70. But spend just three minutes around them, and you realize they are still boys at heart.

Founded by Ed Helman in Baltimore, these guys are a perfect example of how the small-sided, no contact version of the athlete development model being deployed by US Lacrosse applies to not only youth. The Old Timers adapted their game to suit their circumstances: playing inside a gym, using STX soft sticks and modifying the rules for their well-being.

This doesn’t mean soft. They’ve got skills, power on their shots and hustle in their steps. They get a nice little workout. They laugh. They sweat. They banter. They run, fake, dodge, scoop, throw, shoot, defend and occasionally bend at the waist. They all participate, taking rest periods for substitutions. And they keep score…only so they know that it’s time to take a break when one team reaches five goals. And sometimes they have to employ “Green’s Rule” named after Jim Greenwood: you can only shoot on the goal when the goalie is in place, looking right at you with his stick in position. Open goal? No shot. Think they’re hanging up their sticks anytime soon? No shot.
GATHER YOUR FRIENDS AND JOIN TEAM USA

IN A VIRTUAL 5K EVENT!

REGISTER:
chalktalksports.com/uslacrosse5K

RECEIVE:
Hustle and Heart tee shirt, medal and race bib. Applause for your donation to Team USA!

DESIGNATED RACE WEEK:
Mother’s Day 2017. Race, run or walk to challenge yourself to reach your goal.

SHARE:
Photos of you and your friends wearing your gear and medals.

GIVE:
Yourself a pat on the back for getting active, donating to Team USA and chasing dreams with #hustleandheart.

Look for an insta-meet with your favorite Team USA local!

USLACROSSE.ORG/TEAMUSA