

As we take a moment for gratitude this week, we're excited to feature our latest Coalition Spotlight, Bethany Henderson, President of America SCORES National Network. Built from a model initially developed more than 25 years ago, America SCORES operates in 11 U.S. cities and has directly impacted more than 100,000 urban young people.



Recently, America SCORES New York was among the four organizations named winners of the 2020 Sport for Reduced Racial Inequalities Collective Impact Award Supported by The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation. Congratulations to Bethany, the America SCORES New York team and all the winners!

Driven by its mission to inspire urban youth to lead healthy lives, be engaged students, and have the confidence and character to make a difference in the world, America SCORES is the only urban youth development program with curriculum specifically aligned with the National Council of Teachers of English's 12 Standards for English Language Arts, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education's 5 Standards for Physical Education, and the National Youth Leadership Council's 8 K-12 Service-Learning Standards. In addition, the program's physical activity/health outcomes reach Tier I-III standards of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Its successes across the 311 public and charter schools it serves can be summed in a single word — impact. Students in the America SCORES program, 85% of whom live below our country's poverty line, consistently improve their academic performance, physical fitness levels and self-confidence.

The organization foundation built has allowed America SCORES to adapt through the pandemic as they had to, according to Henderson, "be creative in how we continue to help kids feel safe, supported, connected and hopeful during these trying times -- not to mention how we keep them engaged with soccer and with their SCORES teams."

This is what it means to lead change through impact and we're grateful for the work Henderson and her team continue to do in their communities.

Stay tuned to hear more from your fellow Coalition members. If you're interested in being featured or know a game-changing leader or organization we should highlight, please tell us [here](#).

Name: Bethany Henderson

Titles: Network President, America SCORES / CEO, DC SCORES / Faculty, Sports & Entertainment Impact Collective Certificate

Organization/Sport(s): DC SCORES and America SCORES are soccer organizations, but I grew up a basketball player and competed nationally in Ultimate Frisbee during college and after.

Location: Washington, DC



Who was your favorite team and/or athlete growing up?

I far prefer playing sports to watching them, but I have great memories of going to LSU men's basketball games when Shaquille O'Neal was on the team and watching the Boston Red Sox on tv with my grandmother after school.

Who do you attribute your values and perspectives as a sports leader to?

I attribute my values and perspectives as a sports leader to growing up playing team sports. I believe in the wisdom of a well-known African proverb: "if you want to go far, go together." My leadership style is shared leadership -- empowering all members of a team by giving each an opportunity to assume leadership and ownership over their area(s) of expertise.

How has your job changed most, due to COVID-19, in 2020?

The biggest change is that I now work entirely from behind a computer and share my "office space" with a fifth-grader, a seventh-grader, my husband, and a whole bunch of pets. We're constantly moving around the house to get out of the way of each other's Zoom calls. Seriously, though, the

biggest change is that DC SCORES and America SCORES cannot run the soccer leagues that for 25 years formed the core of our youth development programming, the hook for so many kids to participate in the writing and service elements of our programs. As an organization, we've had to be creative in how we continue to help kids feel safe, supported, connected and hopeful during these trying times -- not to mention how we keep them engaged with soccer and with their SCORES teams. I've personally



spent a lot more time than ever before deep-diving into federal legislation, creating and manipulating complex financial models, supporting staff through the extended period of ambiguity we continue to exist in, and creatively iterating programming and operations for our current reality. On the upside, the benefits of a Zoom world are that I've been able to build stronger relationships with colleagues across the continent because we now "see" each other "in person" a couple of times a month instead of once a year.

What's the most challenging aspect of your position as a sports leader?

One of the most challenging, and rewarding, aspects is helping people understand the power of coaches. Few children will grow up to be pro athletes, but all will grow up to be people. A great coach, who cares about and is trained to develop whole humans, not simply skilled athletes, can have an outsized positive difference in a kid's life. Conversely, a terrible coach can have an outsized negative impact.

Why did you initially join the Coalition?

I joined the Coalition because I believe in the power of youth sports to help kids develop into strong, healthy, resilient, connected, confident human beings.

What excites you most about the Coalition's long-term potential?

I am most excited about the potential for bridging the gap between sports-based-youth-development organizations and pay-to-play organizations as we pursue the common goals of sustaining and increasing access to sports for all kids.

Tell us about the most inspiring moment you're most proud of in your career.

My most inspiring SCORES moment was when a stranger across a DC Metro platform saw my DC SCORES shirt and hollered at me: "Yay, DC SCORES! I was in DC SCORES as a kid at [xyz] school!" as he was hopping onto his train going the other direction. That was the first time something like that happened, but it was far from the last. A stranger proudly shouting out their SCORES affiliation to me still gives me shivers, even after 6 years. The power of what we do -- that people identify so strongly with being the power of being part of a SCORES team years, even decades, later -- that's why I do what I do.



Finish this sentence — if I weren't a sports leader, I would be... running for office or teaching in a university or leading a social impact organization focused on increasing civic engagement or taking a sabbatical year to travel the world. Maybe someday I'll do all of those things, too!