

A successful Coalition is driven by its people who collectively move to a vision to be part of something bigger than themselves. This new feature, Coalition Spotlight, will introduce our entire membership to the people and organizations who have been game-changers in what they do inside and outside of games.



We'll begin with Nayla Bautista, president of Volo Kids Foundation. This five-year-old organization was created in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray sparked civil unrest. Its founding mission was to be a safe alternative for young people and their families, using sport as a tool for healing and a means to build community.

To get there, Volo Kids Foundation is steadfastly committed to removing the often-encountered barriers to participation. "The Game Plan" is to provide free, high-quality and equitable sports programs. That includes coaches, officials and curriculum to ensure a safe, fun and structured environment and access regardless of experience level, age, gender or other traditional barrier to play.

The outcome is Volo Kids building communities of active, resilient and confident young people with unlimited access to the power of play.

And it's working. Volo Kids Foundation has expanded beyond Baltimore to five other regions and at the onset of covid-10, virtually and has directly impacted nearly 8,000 kids through 325 programs and has mobilized nearly 3,000 volunteers.

Stay tuned to hear more from your fellow Coalition members. If you're interested in being featured or know an organization we should highlight, please tell us in the comments.

Name

Nayla Bautista

Title

President

Organization/Sport(s)

Volo Kids Foundation

We offer a variety of sports for kids of all skill levels. We use play to build communities of active, resilient and confident kids. The environment we create and the skills we build using sports is more important than the specific sports we provide.



Location(s)

The organization was started in Baltimore. We also provide programs in Washington, D.C., New York City, Boston, Denver, San Francisco, and virtually.

Who was your favorite team and/or athlete growing up? Yankees and the Knicks!

I was born and raised in NYC and basketball has always been my favorite sport. I also admired the leadership and performance of Derek Jeter. I was also a shortstop and captain of my high school softball team.

Who do you attribute your values and perspectives as a sports leader to? I attribute my values and perspectives as a sports leader to: my parents, siblings and uncle. My brother was always a worthy competitor and pushed me to get better while also being a supportive teammate, which taught me that your most valuable teammates are the ones that challenge you while also being your strongest supporters. My younger sister showed me the impact I could have when I lead by example and she instilled in me a love of teaching through encouragement. My parents taught me that rather than wasting energy being frustrated that my teammates on the basketball court wouldn't pass me the ball because I was a girl, I should work hard, build my skills and they would quickly wise up... while my uncle taught me that if anyone didn't believe I belonged on the court, it was their problem and they better get ready to be proved wrong.

What they taught me about navigating that challenge on the court has certainly been applicable off the court as a woman in the field of sports.



How has your job changed most, due to COVID-19, in 2020? We were in high paced growth mode right up until we had to shut down due to safety concerns related to the spread of COVID-19. It was a very sharp change to go from a mindset centered around growing programming quickly enough to satisfy demand in our cities to suddenly halting and pivoting entirely to figuring out new ways to support our families and secure the funding necessary to do so.

What's the most challenging aspect of your position as a sports leader? Knowing how important it is for youth to have access to sports and how far we still need to go to make that possible.

Why did you initially join the Coalition? As a relatively young organization, we were new to the scene and sought out other like minded organizations to learn from. While we have always valued collaboration, we quickly found that not every organization does. While we were working towards similar goals, there was sometimes a hesitation that appeared to be due to concerns about competition. With the onset of Covid,

it became very clear to most across the industry that we will need to work together to navigate the existing challenges. We believe this is the only way to make real change so we jumped at the chance to participate.

What excites you most about the Coalition's long-term potential? The ability to bring together leaders from across the industry and show the true impact we can have by working together.

Tell us about the most inspiring moment you're most proud of in your career. It probably sounds cliché, but the moment that sticks with me is the one that confirmed that I had made the right decision to leave a lucrative career in finance to start a much less stable but more rewarding path in non-profit youth sports. I was a Director at a small youth basketball organization in NYC and a part of my role was coaching a 5th & 6th grade girls basketball team. As a team, we were small, inexperienced and even afraid to step on the court at times. The growth I saw in each of the players over the course of 1 season was incredible - not just their individual skills, but also their willingness to listen and the resulting teamwork. Even so, we went into the last games of the season and playoffs as the underdogs. It was truly a movie moment as we took down the team favored to win in the championship game. While of course we were excited to win, the sportsmanship they exhibited following the game affirmed for me that creating programming centered around building confidence in kids through sport was my true calling.



Finish this sentence — if I weren't a sports leader, I would be... a teacher...but pretty sure I'd be connected to sports one way or another!

[Take Action Center - Act Now To Help Volo Kids Foundation and Your Organization! Tell Congress To Support Youth and Local Sports.](#)