“The team was not the most skilled, but they played good and with a lot of heart. I thought I can’t do much with their ability, but I can do something to lift their morale,” said Brock Hoffey, a 16-year-old goalkeeper at St. John’s High School in Shrewsbury, MA.

Hoffey walked off the field feeling pretty unsettled in 2019 after St. John’s had just beaten WooLax, a team of tough and hardworking kids from Worcester, MA. Worcester is the second largest city in Massachusetts with a long history of industrial manufacturing, but not lacrosse. WooLax is a combined inner city team of players from five high schools.

Hoffey noticed that the team was playing with mismatched helmets. And then he found out that the WooLax coach, Matthew Genkos, was going to give up his paycheck to replace the non-certified helmets with new ones for his team.

In the true spirit of sportsmanship and goodwill, Hoffey offered to organize a fundraiser for new helmets, giving WooLax players the opportunity to play lacrosse safely and with pride. “Growing up, I played on a team that didn’t have matching helmets. I know how it feels. It can be demoralizing,” said Hoffey.

Hoffey set up a GoFundMe campaign, collected donations from his family friends, lacrosse connections, and the hockey community where he’s a player and referee. A US Lacrosse direct service grant closed the gap and in February 2020, Hoffey handed over a check for $6,700 to Coach Genkos to purchase new Cascade helmets for the entire WooLax team.

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Hoffey understands that in order to grow WooLax, you have to look the part. Genkos believes there’s great potential in growing the game in the inner city.

Coach Genkos to purchase new Cascade helmets for the entire WooLax team.

“For a young man, from a competing team, to do this for WooLax is incredible. Words can’t describe how great it is. He stepped up and helped us a ton,” said Genkos, a 2013 graduate of WooLax via Doherty High School, and 2017 graduate of Becker College where he played lacrosse. Genkos believes there’s great potential in growing the game in the inner city.

Genkos understands that in order to grow WooLax, you have to look the part.

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CHAIRMAN’S PERSPECTIVE

BE THANKFUL
Sol Kumin | Chair, US Lacrosse Foundation

This is my first “Chairman’s Perspective” column, and it’s truly an honor to be in this role representing the US Lacrosse Foundation and the outstanding board we have. I want to thank outgoing chair Ed Nordberg for his leadership and friendship.

The sport of lacrosse has been a big part of my life. My experiences playing at St. Paul’s School in Concord, NH, and then at Johns Hopkins University have taught me many lessons that I have taken with me in my personal and professional life, shaping the person I am today. Having a chance to compete at a high level, to win and lose with class and dignity, and build lasting friendships with teammates and coaches are some of the things the game has given me. I am so thankful for all of it.

I am not sure where I would be without lacrosse. I often think about my last college game, a NCAA final four loss to the University of Virginia at University of Maryland’s Byrd Stadium in 1999. I sat on the bench after the game in disbelief that I was graduating without a national championship. All the hours of running, lifting, shooting and preparing with nothing to show for it.

I couldn’t have been more wrong. The experiences the game has given to me, along with meeting some of my best friends, are what I left Byrd Stadium with that day. I am thankful I found this sport of lacrosse.

One of the pillars of US Lacrosse is to grow the game and give more kids the opportunity to play. Together, we are committed to making this happen across the country so more kids can someday be thankful for their experiences, just like I am.

WITH PRIDE

If you read US Lacrosse Magazine editor Matt DaSilva’s columns, then you know that he’s somewhat reluctantly wading into the waters of youth sports as a parent and coach.

“Sometimes, I feel out of my depth. Other times, thanks to the lessons I’ve absorbed through osmosis during my 15 years at US Lacrosse, I feel very much prepared for this environment.

I attended the preseason coaches meeting for the Lutherville-Timonium Recreation Council (LTRC) in February. This is a legacy lacrosse league (established in 1967) in one of the most saturated markets in the country. Traditionally, Baltimoreans have been reluctant to adopt the best practices recommended by US Lacrosse — especially if they conflict with the long-held beliefs passed down through the generations that have played the sport here.

Imagine my surprise, then, to hear the leaders of this program not only vouch for US Lacrosse, but downright gush over what US Lacrosse has to offer.

In recent years, LTRC has altered its rules to align with the Lacrosse Athlete Development Model, while also reimbursing coaches for US Lacrosse membership and Coach Development Program training up to and including Level 2 certification. As a result, they say, registration is up 11 percent this year.

I found myself feeling relieved - as a new coach and concerned parent - that LTRC has committed to age-appropriate guidelines. I listened as the program leaders reassured us that we’d receive coach bag training, a full coaches manual, a skills matrix document and more resources in addition to what we would get from US Lacrosse.

‘Level 2 is mind-blowing, by the way,” one of them said. ‘It’s even better than Level 1.’

They went on to praise the insurance coverage (relaying stories of two LTRC coaches), the Mobile Coach app and the magazine, as well as how cool it was to take teams to Tierney Field.

Finally, at the end of the meeting, I let them know it was great to hear all of these things. I divulged that I work for US Lacrosse. I did so proudly.”
The needs of homeless children extend well beyond the opportunity to play lacrosse, but when playing makes them feel at home in their community, that’s the magic of the game.

Thanks to your support of grants that provide access, a partial First Stick grant and some extra TryLax sticks has made a dream come true for five homeless students in Tacoma, WA.

“I want to pass along my sincere thanks to US Lacrosse, and University Place Lacrosse Club (UPLC), for helping bring the dream of joining a team to five students this year. Over the past several months I have been able to work with 30 fourth and fifth grade girls and boys to introduce them to the game of lacrosse. They LOVE it! As a matter of fact, Four Heroes Elementary School is the host location for many of the Clover Park School District homeless students. As these students arrive from their various schools, several have stopped by to talk about the game and get a stick in their hands to throw a ball around. Just yesterday, one of these students, a fourth grader, asked how he could join next year. I am super proud of the three girls and two boys who were able to join a team with University Place Lacrosse Club. Without the support of US Lacrosse and the commitment of UPLC to provide access, this opportunity was out of reach. I am operating off of ‘build it and they will come’. I am excited for the future and really hope that we can become a host site for a Sankofa clinic in the coming months.

“I am not the only one to observe many meaningful changes for those who took advantage of the opportunity. I would love to see this grow.”

BJ Herman,
Four Heroes Elementary School,
Lakewood, WA

In 2019, 5,592 children were introduced to lacrosse at 85 TryLax sites across the country. For as low as $35, kids participate in a 90-minute clinic where the learning is fun and receive a tee shirt and stick to take home with them. Even if they don’t have a home to call their own.

US Lacrosse in partnership with the Sankofa Foundation offers clinics that are free and focused on giving minority kids an opportunity to participate in a fun environment while removing socioeconomic barriers to entry. Your support is very much appreciated by Dr. Ilca Garza-Gonzalez, superintendent of the Fallbrook Union High School District (FUHS). With nearly 50 percent Hispanic or Latino population and over 1,000 students qualifying for free and reduced-priced meals, along with their strong interest in learning the game. Fallbrook was a clear choice as one of 15 minority host locations already planned for 2020. Nearly 80% of the clinic participants are planning to continue playing lacrosse.

“The coaching staff for our FUHS lacrosse programs has not stopped raving about the clinic. The clinic, organized by the booster club of both the boys and girls lacrosse teams, hosted 116 students. The clinic was amazing. It was a truly magical day with excited students properly equipped to learn a new sport or improve their skills. The coaches were wonderful, fun, engaging and made the experience for the youth and high school participants alike truly memorable,” said FUHS Boys Lacrosse Head Coach Mike Zinniger.

“In my time as principal of FUHS, I have not seen another community-based athletic training program that generated as much interest and has as much positive feedback from our community than that offered by US Lacrosse and the Sankofa Foundation,” stated FUHS principal, Dr. Narciso Iglesias.

I want to personally thank US Lacrosse and the Sankofa Foundation for their continued work to expand diversity in the sport across the US. Our administration has a deep appreciation for our lacrosse programs, in particular how they create opportunities for our student athletes. Thank you for doing the same! We greatly appreciate seeing the sport grow and be inclusive to all in our community. All of the coaches were amazing and did a fantastic job of motivating and encouraging our Fallbrook kids! We are seeing interest from many new players.

On behalf of Fallbrook Union High School District in California, its administration, teachers, students, girls’ and boys’ lacrosse coaching staff, the Fallbrook Boys’ Youth Lacrosse program and our community at large, we want to extend a huge and heartfelt thank you for a wonderful lacrosse learning experience.

Your program has ignited a lacrosse fire that will have a profound impact on our community for years to come.”

Sincerely,
Ilca Garza-Gonzalez
Superintendent
Inaugural Legacy Gala

Inspired by Heart, Hustle & Heroes

Save the Date

11.11.20

Mandarin Oriental Hotel

New York City

Supporting the mission of US Lacrosse to grow and champion America’s first sport - from underserved communities to our national teams and beyond.

uslacrosse.org/legacygala