



BEYOND the GAME

Colorado Soccer Foundation
Annual Report

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It gives my child the opportunity to be able to play soccer, learn teamwork, build on his social skills, and gain discipline.

Parent of 5th Grade Student Athlete, Laredo Elementary



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All Aboard!



Dear Friends and Supporters,

Since launching the Colorado Soccer Foundation nearly five years ago, it has been an honor and joy to see our vision for accessible soccer programming come to life. The impact of our work is not only measurable in numbers, but also visible every day in the passionate faces of the young people who walk through our doors. Their energy, joy, and eagerness to return to the field show that what we are building together is truly special.

This past year, Soccer City Aurora has welcomed more than 140,000 visitors. Young people describe the facility as a second home - a place where they feel safe, welcomed, and excited to play. This sense of belonging reflects a need in Aurora and Metro Denver that previously went unmet and reinforces the importance of creating spaces of critical social infrastructure where young people can thrive.

Our programs continue to grow in reach and impact. This year, Soccer After School connected more than 1,500 elementary students with active opportunities through 35+ school and community partners. Our Summer Skills program reached capacity with over 250 registrations in Aurora and expanded to Sheridan, serving an additional 99 youth with strong community support. Our Teen Coach Mentor workforce further amplifies this impact, developing young leaders who gain job skills while serving as role models for younger players.

Young adults find a welcoming home through Pick Up Play, which keeps our field lights on nightly until 10:00 p.m. and provides equipment, mentorship, and a vibrant multicultural community. Participants spend hours each week on our fields and tell us they feel healthier and more confident. In 2025, Pick Up Play averaged 156 daily check-ins.

This year also brought meaningful growth in donor support and partnerships, including collaboration with 36 local, county, and state organizations. One highlight was the “Be at the Top of Your Game” anti-vaping campaign, which educated youth about the connection between vaping and athletic performance.

All of these achievements reinforce what youth show us every day: when they feel safe, welcomed, and joyful in play, the impact goes beyond the game. Thank you for helping us create a place where every kids can play, pursue their passion, belong, grow, and succeed through the beautiful game. We hope you enjoy the journey as much as we do.

Sincerely,
Curtis Gardner
Executive Director
The Colorado Soccer Foundation



CUE THE
confetti

Mission

To provide access to soccer for kids who want to play.

Community & Connection

We believe soccer builds connection. Soccer City Aurora is more than a facility. It is a safe space and healthy outlet where relationships are formed, mentorship is cultivated, and community thrives.



142,000+ visitors in 2025

The Why

Across Colorado, many young people face barriers to participating in organized sports — including cost, access to facilities, transportation, fewer structured after-school activities, and a lack of safe and welcoming environments. These barriers disproportionately impact families in underserved communities. At the same time, research confirms that participation in sports improves physical health, strengthens mental wellness, increases school engagement, and builds leadership and resilience.



Participation in structured extracurricular activities, including sports, is associated with **improved academic performance and stronger school engagement** (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005).



Youth involved in organized activities demonstrate stronger academic outcomes and **lower rates of behavioral risk** (Eccles & Barber, 1999).



Team sport participation has been linked to lower depressive symptoms and **improved mental health outcomes** (Jewett et al., 2014; Vella et al., 2017).



Regular physical activity contributes to **long-term physical health and chronic disease prevention** (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).



An estimated 1 in 3 young people in the United States will grow up without a mentor outside of their immediate family. Research consistently shows that **caring adult relationships are among the strongest protective factors** in youth development (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2014; Tierney et al., 1995; CDC, 2022).



Our Response

CSF addresses these gaps through **five strategic commitments:**

1. Expanding Access & Opportunity

We prioritize accessible soccer after school leagues, structured skills training programs and pick up play. Our programs are low to no cost so that every youth who wants to play can step on the field.

2. Creating Safe & Welcoming Spaces

Soccer City Aurora provides a high-quality, community-centered inclusive environment where all visitors feel they belong.

3. Youth Development & Leadership Pathways

We embed sportsmanship, integrity, teamwork, and resilience into every program. Our mentorship program includes coaches and staff. We host a youth leadership council with members from our soccer community.

4. Community Partnerships & Connection

We collaborate with schools, health departments, and local organizations to amplify impact. Soccer City is a bridge for families of all backgrounds to gather in one shared space, strengthening relationships across neighborhoods and generations.

5. Operational Excellence & Sustainable Growth

We are committed to delivering a world-class experience because our community deserves nothing less. We strive for long-term financial stability, operational excellence, and measurable outcomes.

Programs with Purpose

Access = Opportunity



Soccer After School

is a collaboration between CSF and 30 local schools and community organizations offering 3rd - 6th graders the opportunity to join a community-based soccer team. The eight week seasons are every Fall and Spring. We partner with the Positive Coaching Alliance to ensure a positive play experience all around!

Student Athletes
Spring Season - 937
Fall Season - 872

Skills Sessions

lifted in 2022 through community-informed design. Each summer the demand grows, which means more soccer, more social skills, and more workforce development for young adult coach mentors who we recruit from right here in our community! The price, pace, and amount of play prove to be just right.



Summer Skills Count
Aurora - 250
Sheridan - 99

Programs with Purpose

156 average players
per night

Safe Welcoming

Pick Up Play: Informal, unstructured games where youth come together to play. A simple plan that has shown enormous impact beyond the physical well-being of athletes.

This year we partnered with the Girls Soccer Coaches at East Middle School and Hinkley High School to dedicate field time for **girls-only** pick up play. In 2025 and beyond we commit to intentionally showing up for female soccer players! This initiative compliments our thriving Women's League that takes place on Sunday nights. In 2025, **598 girls** signed up to play at Soccer City!

The significant impact of pick up play:

63% report improved mental health
66% a stronger sense of belonging
87% improved peer relationships



41,805 player
check-in's in 2025





Partnerships Amplify Impact

Camps with Caring Partners

The Children’s Diabetes Foundation and the Barbara Davis Center for Diabetes have teamed up with CSF yet again to bring the power of that feeling “I am not alone” to kids living with Type 1 diabetes through a three day summer camp experience!



Community Tournaments

In 2025, we hosted three community tournaments, including a new collaboration with **Grassroot Soccer** specifically designed for middle school students. Overall participation increased in our community tournaments by 12.35% compared to the previous year.

987 young athletes took the field, many in their first-ever organized community tournament!





Partnerships Amplify Impact

Community Clinics

We had a blast teaming up with the new **NWSL Denver Summit FC** crew to host a community clinic for 75 kids!

Our long time friends at the **Colorado Rapids MLS** also came out for skills training to help coach and play this summer!



Last, but surely not least, Siete Foods and U.S. Women's Professional Player **Naomi Girma** delivered a community clinic for 60 kids this summer, a once in a lifetime opportunity!



BELONGING &
CONNECTION

We deeply value the input and partnerships from our members and community stakeholders:

A Precious Child
 Adams County Health Department
 Adams School District 14
 Albion FC
 Arapahoe County Health Department
 Aurora Community Connections
 Aurora Mental Health
 Aurora Partners for Thriving Youth
 Aurora Police Department
 Aurora Public Schools
 Children's Diabetes Foundation
 Children's Hospital Colorado
 City of Aurora
 Colorado Rapids
 Colorado Rapids Youth Soccer Club
 Colorado Soccer Association Referee
 Education Program
 COSA Sports
 Denver Afterschool Alliance
 Denver Botanic Gardens



Denver Public Health and Environment
 Denver Public Schools
 Denver Summit FC
 HOPE Online Charter Academy
 IMatter
 Iron Sharp
 My SPARK
 Mi Pueblo Market
 Positive Coaching Alliance
 Savio House
 Sheridan School District
 Sheridan Rising
 Soccer Without Borders
 Soccer Forward
 Special Olympics, CO Striker Unified Team
 Spring Institute
 United Soccer Coaches
 UC Health
 Wholly Kicks
 Young People In Recovery



Leadership Pathways

In 2025, we hired and trained **208 Coach-Mentors**. Coach-mentors are drawn from the local community and partner schools. They provide trusted guidance and model teamwork, leadership, and respect. They give their time and energy to ensure kids in our community have access to a safe environment with caring mentors as they develop their soccer and social skills.

75% of adults who had a mentor growing up credit that relationship as a major contributor to their success later in life.

Garringer, M., & Benning, C. (2023).



We intentionally train our staff and coach-mentors with Safe Sport, Heads Up, the **Positive Coaching Alliance** resources, and de-escalation tactics. Through our partnership with Grassroot Soccer, we trained 17 coach-mentors in **MindSKILLZ**, a flagship curriculum for adolescent mental health combining soccer with life skills education to build resilience, improve attitudes toward mental health, reduce stigma, and strengthen support networks.

Leadership grows when young people are trusted to lead.

“Working with the Summer Skills Camp has been a very rewarding experience for me. As a coach mentor training children 4–6, I developed strong skills in organizing practices, planning engaging activities, and adapting to the different needs of young players. The program helped me grow personally and professionally by strengthening my **leadership, patience, and communication** skills. It has truly shaped the way I approach teaching and mentoring athletes.” - **Britany Lomas, Coach-Mentor**

Mentorship in Motion = The Difference Makers



The **Young Adult Advisory Board** is made up of 30 highly-engaged young leaders who brought their unique perspectives, creativity, and passion to serve as a voice for the community. They kicked the year off with mantras and personal mottos to strengthen resilience and self-awareness. They participated in a Tobacco Retail Advocacy Training, organized two community clean ups, and gathered food and clothing items to donate to the Denver Indian Family Resource Center.

Impact Stories

Jude's journey

Jude Chavez joined the Soccer After School program with Academy of Advanced Learning in 2022 as a fourth grader. Each season fueled his excitement for the next, and he went on to participate in **six consecutive SAS seasons** before aging out as a seventh grader.

Because of Jude's passion for soccer and commitment to developing his skills, he also began participating in our Summer Skills Training program in 2023 and became a Pick Up Play member at Soccer City Aurora. Between June 1 and December 23, 2025, Jude checked in **41 times to play pick up soccer**.

In 2025, Jude further deepened his engagement by becoming an **active participant in our Young Adult Member Advisory Council**.



*"I really like it here - it feels like a **second home** because of how close it is and how accessible it is for people like myself who love to play soccer. I try to come 4 times per week to play and be with my friends. I have been more happy over the past four years since getting a membership here."*

Jude's mom Brisa, who also spends a lot of time at Soccer City, believes Jude is happier here. *"I try to bring him as often as I can so we are not sitting around at the house."*

Impact Stories

Ahisar's adventure



Ahisar playing soccer for the first time at Soccer City Aurora in Summer Skills Training, 2023

"I was 10 years old when I first came into Soccer City Aurora, I remember it being welcoming and diverse. It was a hot summer day in June, 2023. I really had no clue of what I was doing since it was **my first time ever playing soccer** alongside my younger brother. We went into our first session of the Summer Skills program with a lot of enthusiasm and curiosity. During the session we were put into groups depending on our age. A funny memory that I have of that session was when my brother tried to stand on a ball and fell and I was laughing. After the session we were given a frozen popsicle. Even though I never touched a ball before entering Soccer City, I left feeling like I was meant for this. Soccer made me feel happy, joyful and comfortable and still does. After leaving Soccer City I begged my parents to put me on a team.



Arrupe Jesuit Varsity HS 2025

My brother and I started playing in a Sunday league, eventually both of us making it to Select 1 at Rapids Central. I attend Arrupe Jesuit High School, where I played **Varsity soccer during my freshman year**. Through Arrupe I became an **intern** at Soccer City where I learn life skills and learn to apply what I have learned in school into everyday life. **Soccer City was the place where my dream was born.**"



CSF Intern, 2025-26

Impact Stories

Coach-Mentors



Martha Ozuna, Coach-Mentor Academy 360, DPS Charter

“Thank you for helping our kids stay off the streets and enjoy what every child should have the opportunity to enjoy: sports.”



Juan Rossi, Coach-Mentor Teacher, Central Elementary, Adams 14

“Every year we have a large number of interested parties, but this year we received 70 applications to be in the program when we only have room for 30. But the most gratifying thing is that in the last practice when we asked if they wanted to be part of it again, all the kids raised their hands.”



Melissa Ortiz Valles, Family Liaison and Coach-Mentor Fulton, Elementary Aurora Public Schools

“There are so many things going on outside of our school community that have impacted our students and their families directly. Soccer After School has provided a safe space for students and their families to feel safe, disclose and be able to escape the harsh reality that they are going through (even if it's only for a couple of hours).”

Impact Stories

Family & Fans

Parent of 6th Grade Student Athlete Altura Elementary

“Es todo para mi hijo. Jugar le hace feliz, estar con otras personas le hace feliz. Ver a mi hijo tan seguro de sí mismo cada día hace que todo valga la pena. Esperemos que siempre pueda ser parte de Soccer City.”

“It's everything for my son. Playing makes him happy, being with other people makes him happy. Seeing my son so confident every day makes it all worthwhile. Let's hope he can always be part of Soccer City”.



Parent of 4th Grade Student Athlete Aurora Community Connections

“Me encantó inscribir a mis hijos en este tipo de programas, ya que no todas las escuelas ofrecen actividades extracurriculares, y es una forma maravillosa de involucrarnos más con nuestros hijos y de que ellos se involucren más con la comunidad.”

“I loved enrolling my children in these types of programs, since not all schools offer extracurricular activities, and it's a wonderful way to get more involved with our children and for them to get more involved with the community.”



Parent of 5th Grade Student Athlete Green Valley Elementary

“It was a great opportunity having my child play for 3 consecutive years in the Soccer After School program. My son was always so excited just knowing the soccer season was gonna start and he got to love to play soccer and be part of a team!! Thank you so much for the great program you guys have and for making it affordable for so many families like us.”



Generous Donors

We rely on the generosity of our donors to achieve 50% of our funding. Through program fees and facility rentals, we are able to cover the remaining 50% of our annual expenses. This balanced model allows us to remain one of the most accessible soccer options for families in the Denver metro area. **Generous support ensures the sustainability of our work.**

Auctus Security
Adama Foundation
Children's Diabetes Foundation
City of Aurora
Civitas Resources, Inc
Colorado Gives Foundation
Colorado Rapids MLS
Denver Summit FC
Daniels Fund
Denver Youth Employment Program
Design Edge
Grassroot Soccer
InBank
Kaiser Permanente Colorado Mano Foundation
Newstripe, Inc
ReSchool
Rize Exteriors
Singer Family Foundation
The Humphreys Foundation

Individual Donors

Anonymous (37 donors)	Jennifer Wright
Aaron Rodriguez	Jennifer Samples
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Alan Stine	Jessie Karlovitch
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Christine Gravelle	Molly Kufeldt
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Curtis Smith	Nicholas Dawson
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George Gastis	Teresa Cunningham
George Dick	The Catlow's
Gerard Louison	Tina Fay
Gretchen Van Noy	TorHoerman Law
H Grange	Ugne Zaltauskiene
Jackie Stolze	Virg Setzer
Jeffrey Donovan	100% Board Giving



Staff, Board, & Volunteers



HEART OF
THE MISSION



Curtis Gardner, Executive Director
Jodi Asarch, Development Director
Wilmer Barrera, Engagement Director
Emily Fay, Program Director
Maher Babiker, Operations Manager
Lizza Lopez, Program Coordinator

Supervisors

William Baird
Kimberly Pascual
Cesar Olivas
Karol Bird-Gomez

Board Officers

Andy Stine, Board Chair
Paola Ramirez, Vice Chair
Aaron Nagel, Treasurer

In 2025, we saw a significant increase in VOLUNTEERS from:

Regis Jesuit
Cherry Creek High FBLA
Cherry Creek Boys Soccer
Civitas employees
Soccer Without Borders
Aurora Central School Boys Soccer
Young People in Recovery
and many more individuals!

Soccer City Assistants

Andres Itzia
Brody Jackie
Daniel Jemely
David Karla
DeVaughn Lisa
Emi Nyjah
Elena Perla
Evelyn Zenat

Board Members

Jeff Chapman
Emily Garnier
Evan Husney
Lee Zarzecki





The Momentum

When we share the world's game, we strengthen the world around us.



The Opportunity

This past summer at Fort Logan Northgate, the fields filled with nearly 100 smiling young athletes and **offered a powerful glimpse of what's possible when community and opportunity come together.** In partnership with the Sheridan School District No. 2 and local organizations, CSF's 2025 Summer Skills Training pilot program brought youth together three days a week while also employing local high school students as coach-mentors. With transportation support from the district, two Fort Logan Northgate teams also joined our Fall Soccer After School program, extending that impact beyond the summer months.

Inspired by the proven success of Soccer City Aurora and our expansion programs, CSF is now preparing to launch a capital campaign to bring a **second Soccer City to Southwest Denver.** Supporters have a meaningful opportunity to invest in lasting impact through leadership gifts, facility naming opportunities, and endowment contributions that will ensure the game and the community it builds remain accessible for generations to come.



Everyone gets the same shot.



PLEASE JOIN US

Help kids access soccer!



Thank you
for being
part of our
community!



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