

Fit for Life

A Bay Area foundation inspires underserved youth to make fitness (and fun) an everyday priority.



Fit Kids Founder Ashley Hunter readyes her team.

Writers always hope their stories will have a positive impact on their readers, perhaps even a life-changing one. Indeed, that was the case for Ashley Hunter. The Menlo Park mother of four credits an article in *Gentry* for the “ah-ha” moment that changed not only the trajectory of her life but the lives of hundreds of low-income elementary school students as well. “I was reading about the Bay Area Youth Sports Foundation in *Gentry*,” recalls Hunter, “when I thought to myself, ‘All these kids can’t afford to play sports and that’s not okay.’ I knew I could do something to help.”



led by two Fit Kids-trained coaches who conduct assessments for each participant at the start, middle, and end of each program. This costs Fit Kids \$8,500 or \$7 per child per class, with most of the monies paying for its coaches, training, and salaries, plus all the equipment, Hunter explains.

The foundation offers a charter option appropriate for students through fifth grade to qualified schools and community organizations that have on-site coaching available. Each charter program costs \$4,500 and includes a bag of brand new equipment plus access to the Fit Kids’ curriculum and training videos through a secure website portal.

The goal, says Hunter, is to make fitness fun while helping kids build essential fitness skills such as strength, power, and agility, as well as the basic movement and motor skills like hand-eye coordination, running and throwing.

Gabriel Anguiano, Jr., the ALAS (Academies for Learning After School) coordinator for Willow Oaks, sees firsthand how Fit Kids has touched the lives of students at the Ravenswood District K–8 school. Seven years ago, Anguiano was a parent and soccer coach at the school when he noticed the lack of exercise opportunities for the younger grades. Willow Oaks offers soccer, basketball, and volleyball for the middle school grades, but no such options were available for the K-5 students.

“I saw a big void with our little ones,” recalls Anguiano. “As a parent, an administrator, and a coach, I believe it’s very important to have kids participate in structured play from an early age—not only to develop their skills but also to plant the seed for a healthy lifestyle.” Thanks to Fit Kids, Willow Oaks now offers 60-minute classes every Monday and Wednesday to 110 participating in its after-school program—at no cost to the students or the school.

“At Fit Kids, we envision a world where opportunities for structured, beneficial physical activity are available to all children,” concludes Hunter. “We believe it’s essential as the foundation for a healthy, active life.” ♦

—JILL LAYMAN

Ready, Set, Play!

dynamic executive director. What started with just three schools in the Ravenswood School District now

extends throughout the Bay Area and to the KIPP-affiliated charter schools (Knowledge Is Power Program), including one in Los Angeles and two in Houston, as well as community organizations like the Peninsula Boys & Girls Clubs and Redwood City PAL.

“For many kids in our community, after-school physical activities and sports are easily accessible,” notes longtime board member Amy Burnett. “However, for just as many, this isn’t the case. Fit Kids can help bridge this gap by providing structured after-school fitness programs to kids who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to participate.”

The Fit Kids Foundation currently sponsors 16 “core” programs and 25 “charter” programs, and is hoping to raise more funds from community donors to expand further. “We’re focused on expanding to meet the need and the demand in our local communities,” says Hunter. “We want to leverage our relationships close to home to bring Fit Kids to more children in the Bay Area.”

The core program provides K-2 students with a one-hour structured fitness class twice a week for a total of 50 classes taught over the school year. Each class is

