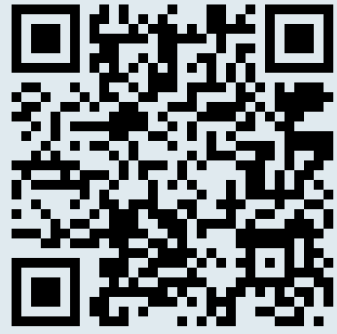




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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Tom Cole
Founder & CEO

For those of us who remember the classic New Year's song "Auld Lang Syne," there's a deeper message in the old Scots motto.

"We'll take a cup of kindness yet" is the line that sticks with me: kindness and blessings. Those are the words that come to mind when I reflect on Kids Unlimited's 25th year of serving kids and families — and the years still in store for our work.

Kids Unlimited in 2023 represented the culmination of an outpouring of kindness, love, commitment and hope. I feel so humbled and blessed to have known people who gave their all and left an incredible mark on this organization. Collectively, our work to create educational opportunities and achieve equity for children of poverty transformed community norms in Southern Oregon, as we all dreamed.

A quarter century since Kids Unlimited's inception as a grassroots afterschool program with 50 participants, our model is revered as undeniable proof of what can happen when kids are empowered with opportunities. Our participants are leaders in their professions, their communities and in their commitment to Kids Unlimited. Theirs are the strongest testaments to our work's longevity. They are the Unlimited.

The strength of our relationships has always been Kids Unlimited's greatest strength. And our capacity for building relationships will only become more vital in the coming years.

Family bonds are being tested in this time of digital-age distractions, technology's constant interruptions and the diversion of traditional adolescent development. Despite the migration of activities and attention spans online, kids and adults alike still yearn for real connections that imbue their everyday experiences with meaning.

Engaging our families in new ways was a key initiative in 2023. We developed programs and systems to reconnect with our parents and integrate kids and families as shared participants in our mission.

The new parent involvement plan for KU Academy engages families in hands-on monthly school events and educational opportunities. Read more on page 11 about how we incentivize regular family participation and volunteering.

A highlight of this effort was 2023's holiday campaign, culminating in our Whoville-themed party, where more than 1,500 kids and parents engaged in activities to make holiday memories, share kindness and love and prioritize quality time together over winter break by utilizing items in gift bags that went home with every family.

It was just one of several celebrations in commemoration of 25 years. In June, Kids Unlimited hosted our annual fundraising gala with a special look back at our quarter century of youth development. More than 40 people, representing diverse aspects of our organization, shared their experiences for "The Kids Unlimited 25th Anniversary Story." Several are featured inside this report, and all can be read on our website.

What do the next 25 years look like? While we can't predict the future, we can look to the past for a blueprint for what's made our organization unique: responding, adapting and never being afraid of change. Pivotal changes for our organization emerged in 2023, when we began constructing the framework for programming that will yield new opportunities and move us into the next quarter century.

The qualities of our commitment to children and families must define the next 25 years. We recognized in 1998 that kindness could make the difference for them. It still does today, and it will in the future.

Thank you for your belief in the Unlimited.

KIDS UNLIMITED

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



KIDS UNLIMITED 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



WHO WE ARE

- Through empowering educational opportunities, Kids Unlimited prepares and inspires children to better themselves while bettering their communities.
- Our focus on achieving equity for youth who face economic and cultural barriers forges their path toward high school graduation, college success and career readiness. We make these goals reasonable for all students — regardless of race, language, ethnicity, gender, economic status or zip code.
- The longevity of our relationships with kids not only builds student confidence but also strengthens families. Ours is a comprehensive and holistic approach to programming and services — proven over decades of listening, learning and evolving.
- Nearly all of our participants experience poverty.
- More than 80% are from Latino households, 56% of those non-English speaking.
- Nearly one-third of students attending KUA academies are designated migrant.
- Many KU families need additional support beyond education for their children.

WHAT WE DO

- Serve kids year-round, bridging school, afterschool and summer services
- Bring afterschool programs to 10 of the highest poverty elementary schools in our region, which includes the communities of Medford and White City.
- Operate two public charter schools recognized by Oregon Department of Education as two of the most diverse public schools in our state.

- Elevate the region's pre-K options with our focus on kindergarten readiness, socio-emotional development and hands-on, active learning, as well as wraparound support for families.
- Offer 10-hour structured school days centered around increased instructional time and embedded enrichments in arts, music, culinary, sports and other programming often economically out of reach for our families.
- Employ highly qualified, diverse teaching staff, many bilingual, who offer culturally competent programming.
- Provide thousands of meals each day, all cooked from scratch, often incorporating locally sourced vegetables, produce and proteins.
- Leverage youth sports programs as incentives for academic achievement, known as “pass to play.”

WHY WE NEED YOU

Kids Unlimited is a nonprofit organization that relies on foundation grants, private donations, business sponsorships, community partnerships and government allocations. We are and always have been committed to cultivating relationships that can financially sustain our programs.

Offering “free” services removes our participants’ economic and cultural barriers to ensure their access and equity. There’s no magic formula for sustaining our model. But we know when we do meaningful work and achieve desired outcomes, we secure a following that generates funding.

KIDS UNLIMITED AT A GLANCE

STUDENTS AT KU ACADEMY MEDFORD:	461
STUDENTS AT KU ACADEMY WHITE CITY:	96
MEDFORD PRE-KU STUDENTS:	36
WHITE CITY PRE-KU STUDENTS:	36
KU AFTERSCHOOL AND SUMMER PARTICIPANTS:	707
GRADUATES IN TRANSITION PROGRAMS:	462
FOOD PROGRAM MEALS SERVED ANNUALLY:	238,592
CLOTHING ITEMS DISTRIBUTED ANNUALLY:	16,960

KU ACADEMY IS A SOUTHERN OREGON STANDOUT!

KU ACADEMY HOLDS THESE KEYS TO SUCCESS

- 10-hour structured school days focus on increased instructional time — approximately 30% more than Medford district schools — closing the achievement gap.
- Year-round school serves the needs of working families and builds consistency for better-adjusted students — and teachers
- KUA students outperform their Latino and English language learning counterparts at other local schools on statewide assessments in math and English language arts.
- Embedded enrichments offer opportunities in arts, music, culinary, sports and other programming often economically out of reach for KUA families.
- Our Food Program fulfills students' daily nutritional needs with free, freshly prepared meals — breakfast, lunch and dinner — cooked from scratch.
- Highly qualified, diverse teaching staff — many bilingual — provide culturally competent programming with smaller classroom sizes.
- KUA's Medford campus is equipped with modern technology, outdoor playing fields, a garden, culinary and science labs, a dance studio, dedicated performing arts center and in-depth visual arts program with on-site ceramics kiln.
- Elective courses include television broadcasting and music production in KUA's state-of-the-art media studio, and graphic arts in our on-site print shop.
- Additional time for authentic hands-on learning opportunities, excursions and field trips.
- Increased opportunities for extra help and tutoring.
- KUA public charter schools in Medford and White City are recognized by Oregon Department of Education as two of the most diverse public schools in our state.



KUA STUDENTS TESTING STRONG

KUA STUDENTS OUTPERFORM LATINO COUNTERPARTS LOCALLY ON STATE TESTS

Students at Kids Unlimited Academy showed statistically significant growth in mathematics and English language arts in 2023. And KUA's English language learners — the majority Latino — are outperforming their counterparts at other local schools on statewide assessments.

"We are above the state average in almost every grade," said Cheryl Graham, KUA math instructional coach and testing coordinator.

KUA's math assessments scored in the top 27% of all regional Title I schools for grades 3-5 said Graham. State testing doesn't begin until third grade, and Title I designation indicates a school serves a large population of children whose families experience poverty.

"You're seeing the impact we're having with these students," said Kids Unlimited CEO Tom Cole. "Our school is outperforming similar schools."

KUA's largest areas of math growth — a 10% increase in students meeting the state standard — was in third and sixth grades last school year, said Graham. The public charter school also saw a large improvement in the number of students still developing skills but who nearly met the level of proficiency on state standards, she added.

That measure was seen in four of the six grade levels that tested in math and ELA.

Acknowledging that growth is happening more rapidly in math than in ELA, Graham said KUA's biggest jump in that discipline was 11% among third graders. KUA's scores on the English language proficiency exam improved by 3%, she added.

Compared with seven local schools with high enrollments of Latino students, KUA's state test scores overall ranked second, said Graham. But the public charter school also had the largest number of Latino students — 242 — taking state tests.

Growth in pass percentages from 2022 - 2023 increased in almost every grade level in math and English language arts.
MATH grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 all improved their pass percentage from 2022-2023.
ELA grades 3, 4, 6 and 8 all improved their pass percentage from 2022-2023.

A LIFETIME OF RELATIONSHIPS

Kids Unlimited's history and model prove that all children — despite barriers they inherit and encounter — are able to realize opportunities that ultimately change lives, break cycles and transform communities. Generational progress achieved through our work is widespread — and growing! Kids Unlimited alumni serve in leadership positions across our community — and the nation — including in our own organization as teachers, administrators, staff, board members and parents. They are the Unlimited.



"Growing up as a Kids Unlimited kid, I felt empowered to break barriers and to change the narrative of what a first-generation Latina student can accomplish if given the opportunity. Being part of KU has allowed me to accomplish things I never even dreamed about.

"For undergraduate I attended Bates College. After graduating, I received the Fulbright Grant to teach English in Colombia for two years. When I returned to the states, I attended Arizona State University and received my master's in secondary education.

"I was part of KU's first afterschool program. I started kindergarten without speaking a single word of English. I still remember my first day walking into the cafeteria and hearing Edgar, a KU staff member, greet me in Spanish and another staff member, Tanny, greet students with a big, welcoming smile.

"During homework time, I greatly appreciated the one-on-one and small-group support I received because there was no way I could have done my homework on my own. I know this support played a key part in my English acquisition. The staff went out of their way to make students feel seen, heard and valued.

"As a third grader, I remember participating in the first KU Rotary Basketball Program. This was the first time I touched a basketball or played on a team. The Rotary coaches taught me and my peers the importance of hard work, commitment and teamwork.

"I returned to Medford in January 2022 for a position with KU's administrative team. I support Spanish-speaking parents, co-create and organize school events, lead the PAC/ Migrant Ed meetings and support our other administrative staff.

"I feel blessed to be back in the valley and working in a place that feels like my second home and second family."

— **Lupita Vargas, KU Director of Educational Services**

"A family friend approached my mom and explained they were going to offer an afterschool program at Oak Grove Elementary, where they would help with homework and provide activities for students at very little cost. Both my parents worked, and my older brothers — in middle school and high school — never wanted to watch me.

"At first my mom couldn't believe it — too good to be true! She didn't have to pick me up from school until 5:30, and they would help me with homework and provide a snack.

"As I was growing up, KU became part of my life in and out of school. I would have somewhere to go after school and finish my homework and work with site counselors who dedicated time for me to not only finish my schoolwork but understand the academic subjects. English was my second language, and both my parents only attended grade school in Mexico, never receiving a higher education.

"KU was fundamental in my life because it provided a safe place and a group of people who believed in me and wanted to see me succeed. KU created recreational basketball teams for us to join because my parents weren't aware of extracurricular activities. In the summertime during middle school, KU was my first job, working the summer program and being a junior counselor. Being part of KU was the leading influence for me to stay in school, play sports and graduate from high school.

"Through school and the opportunities from KU, I was the first in my family to graduate from high school and receive my associate's degree in fire science. I am thankful because I was able to pursue my dream career of becoming a firefighter and currently work as a firefighter/EMT for the City of Roseburg. I am gratified that now I have a family, my daughters can be part of KU and continue to succeed in life."

— **Daniel Banuelos**



Read these stories and more in "The Kids Unlimited 25th Anniversary Story," a special project celebrating KU's quarter century of youth development. More than 40 people, representing diverse aspects of our organization, shared their experiences from 1998 to the present for this commemorative book released at our 25th anniversary fundraising gala. It is available as an electronic download for everyone to enjoy at <https://kuoregon.org/ku-25th-anniversary/>



As we celebrate a quarter century of youth development, your support helps us reach the next milestone. A gift of just \$25 provides a student's uniform for Kids Unlimited Academy, fills a desk with school supplies or purchases an entire week of school lunches. Donate \$250 to sponsor a class field trip, plant our school garden or fire our ceramics kiln. Contributions of \$2,500 support our sports teams and boost our scholarship fund for graduating high school seniors.

Make it a recurring donation, and you help make the Unlimited possible!

COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

NEW KU CLASSROOMS IMPROVE MEDFORD NEIGHBORHOOD

Kids Unlimited's growing presence has been a beacon in a once-tarnished neighborhood.

A new building dedicated to education is KU's latest gift to Medford's Liberty Park area. The two-story structure with eight classrooms replaced a blighted residence on a 10,000-square-foot parcel. In addition to serving students at KU Academy public charter school, the facility serves the community with meeting spaces for parents and the KUA school board, whose regular sessions are open to the public.

"The footprint of Kids Unlimited has grown and improved the neighborhood," said Tom Cole, KU founder and CEO.

When KU brought its youth center to Liberty Park nearly two decades ago, the area was notorious throughout the state for its rates of crime, drug use and poverty. Removing barriers to education and empowering its participants — 80% Latinx, nearly all of whom are economically disadvantaged — KU has bettered the lives of youth, who have in turn, bettered their community.

The new classrooms will allow KUA to enroll another 200 students from its waiting list. Initiated in 2017, the project was funded with a generous foundation grant.



services for pre-KU students in White City. These efforts correspond with transferring eligible K-2 students from our public charter school campus in White City to Medford and phasing out KUA middle school in 2023-24.

KUA added pre-K to its student body in 2019, expanding in 2020 to its White City campus to serve students in the Eagle Point school district, as well as transfers. Continued expansion and improvement of Pre-KU helps to alleviate a local — and nationwide — shortage of quality preschool programs and affordable child care.

National studies indicate schools that focus on high-quality primary programs build stronger foundations for academic success in the middle and high school years. KU's support services ensure children from pre-K to high school have the resources to thrive academically, emotionally and socially.

KUA stakeholders in 2023 participated in the decision to rededicate the school to this process — beginning with its youngest students — and the organization's vision for all students' brightest futures. Middle school opportunities for KU afterschool enrichment and summer, winter and spring break camps remain a vital part of the organization's programming.

The change began aligning KUA's kindergarten through fifth-grade population with other Medford 549C elementary schools, as sixth graders districtwide were newly encompassed in three middle schools.

REVAMPED KU FOOD MENU BRINGS FRESHNESS, SEASONAL VARIETY

A new Food Program menu in 2023 put more variety and seasonal specialties on students' plates.

Menus still rotate weekly and monthly but also incorporate quarterly themes highlighting fresh fall and spring produce. KU serves breakfast, lunch and dinner at its KU Academy, where all students are eligible for each daily meal, cooked from scratch using fresh ingredients in our on-site kitchen. The same dinners are served to KU afterschool participants in their respective program sites.

Serving about 900 meals daily at multiple locations, KU in 2023 produced nearly 238,600 plates of wholesome food. KU's nationally recognized, award-winning food program is unique in the Medford school district.

Learn more about our food program at kuoregon.org/food-program. We are an equal opportunity provider and employer.



EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS INTENSIFY AT KU'S YOUNGER GRADE LEVELS

Kids Unlimited committed in 2023 to sowing the seeds for children's education sooner.

Focusing on its youngest learners, KU Academy shifted its enrollment capacity away from middle school toward primary grades — and younger. The strategy aims to cultivate our earliest learners, many of whom are among our most vulnerable.

The result will be this year's expansion of grades K-5 at the KU Academy's Medford campus while we centralize and enhance



COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES EXPAND

Kids Unlimited's longtime afterschool program got a fresh look and infusion of energy in fall 2023. KU's origins date to 1998, when afterschool launched at Medford's Oak Grove Elementary.

KU staff redesigned the afterschool structure with clear objectives for each week, reinforced as standards for all program staff. Some of KU's most popular activities, including dance and martial arts, were joined by new options for STEAM, visual arts, media and tutoring.

A highlight was the hovercraft construction project by KUA instructional coach Cheryl Graham, who also offers math tutoring. Middle school students could elect to participate in comic strip design, podcasting with Gemineye or screen-printing in KU's EmpowerPrint shop.

KU continues to operate academic-focused afterschool programs at Medford's highest poverty elementary schools. Our staff provides 90 minutes per day of homework help in reading and math with the same academic curriculum used during students' regular school days. Learn more at <https://kuoregon.org/after-school-program/>



COMMITMENT TO FAMILIES

NEW PARENT INVOLVEMENT PLAN BUILDS EQUITY FOR FAMILIES

KU's partnership with parents grew in 2023, an initiative that strengthens families and drives student success.

Our KU Academy's parent involvement plan and student-parent contract engages families in monthly school events and educational opportunities and incentivizes regular participation and volunteerism. KUA families are required to complete monthly volunteer hours and agree to follow standards that support their students' education.

Higher levels of parent involvement and engagement have been shown to promote students' higher academic achievement. KUA staff model and reinforce this value through mentoring and academic assistance for both students and families.

The new program also aims to reduce barriers and to build equity among KUA's parent community, representing low-income Latino families often restricted by citizenship, cultural and economic challenges. Parent engagement events, including accompanying educational materials, are promoted and conducted in both English and Spanish. Site Council, Family Nights, assemblies and pep rallies are a few examples of recurring KUA events for students and families.

KUA's goal is not only increased success measured by report cards but ultimately socio-emotional development and health. The program's outcomes will be measured by an annual review and ultimately a four-year analysis of tracking school attendance, credit attainment and academic achievement.



SPORTS

PASS TO PLAY GIVES KIDS A SENSE OF PURPOSE

Kids Unlimited sports remove barriers to participation for players and spectators alike.

A key component of KU's Pass to Play is equity for parents, many of whom never played sports for reasons of culture, language or economics. Adults who show up to watch their players are welcomed and included in the arena of athletics, many for the first time in their lives, illustrating how KU is "changing the game," literally and metaphorically.

The principal is epitomized in KU's golf program, in which 90% of participants had never before set foot on a course. Launched in 2022 for 25 kids, the program was hosted by Bear Creek Golf Center and supported by the Coquille Indian Tribe. This partnership introduced most participants to golf for the very first time — 90% of the kids had never before set foot on a course.

Leveraging community volunteers and partnerships, Pass to Play removes participant fees, transportation needs and cultural barriers. National research shows nearly 8 out of 10 kids who live in high-poverty households don't play sports.

Pass to Play in 2024 will expand into an instructional basketball league for grades K-2. On the court, kids who have experienced tremendous hardships find purpose; they receive positive feedback and feel pride, even if they never score a basket. Finding a place of belonging is the higher goal.



SIGNATURE KIDS UNLIMITED EVENT RETURNED IN FULL FORCE FOR 2023

The Southern Oregon Open hosted almost twice the number of teams in 2023 as in the previous year, returning the basketball tournament to its historical prominence.

Representing boys and girls in grades 5-12, 186 teams converged on the region to play over Mother's Day weekend. Of teams competing, 165 traveled from out of the area — California, Nevada and elsewhere in Oregon. That number was nearly double the participants KU hosted in 2022, a rebuilding year from the pandemic's disruption.

The benefit for KU dates to 2007, when local basketball standout Kyle Singler designed it as his South Medford High School senior project. Supported by Singler's family, the tournament became a vital fundraiser with help from such local sponsors as Lithia and & Driveway. Singler went on to lead Duke University to an NCAA national title and played for seven seasons in the NBA.

The 15th annual event was championed by local chambers of commerce as a significant economic contributor regionally, believed to generate \$1 million in revenue through hospitality, according to local chambers of commerce. The tournament hosted 19 teams and generated \$1,000 in revenue its inaugural year.



WE CELEBRATED IN 2023

Along with our 25th anniversary in 2023, Kids Unlimited marked several milestone events. More than 1,500 KU families in December stepped through a giant storybook into Dr. Seuss' Whoville to play games, enjoy treats and take home special gift bags. KU's annual auction and gala in June featured dinner by celebrity chef Ron Duprat, The Royal Cup golf tournament hosted by NFL star Odell Beckham Jr. and the establishment of a scholarship fund for KU alumni. KU Academy hosted the school's first "grad walk," staged two theater performances and raised more than \$8,000 during the annual school jog-a-thon.



KIDS UNLIMITED 25TH ANIVERSARY GALA



GRAD WALK



WHOVILLE CELEBRATION



JOG-A-THON

OUR MISSION AND VISION: EQUITY TO EXCELLENCE

Twenty-five years since our inception, Kids Unlimited continues to empower children through academic achievement and removing barriers to access and equity. In the past quarter century, KU has almost inconceivably grown from a grassroots pilot program with 50 participants to the region's largest youth development organization. Our model ensures high school graduation, college success and career readiness are reasonable goals for all students regardless of race, language, ethnicity, gender, economic status or zip code. And our kids better themselves while bettering their communities, ultimately realizing their Unlimited futures.



Help us make a difference in 2024

Please send your donation by check today, or donate online at kuoregon.org/Give

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