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Tom Cole
Founder & CEO

It all adds up. The years. The effort. The support. The impact.

It's the totality of the journey that gives each year its meaning, and it's hard to differentiate each year's accomplishments from the cumulative effect of decades. Every year involves recollections of celebrations, achievements, experiments, challenges and triumphs. Since Kids Unlimited's inception almost 27 years ago, the memories and collective impacts are myriad strands in a lifeline for youth and their families.

Kids Unlimited's trajectory has only been accelerating since we founded our first afterschool program in 1998. And changes continue at a more rapid pace than ever before with shifts more profound than we've ever encountered as an organization.

Within the past five years alone, society's and technology's impacts on how children are growing up, how they're learning, how they're developing relationships are conspiring toward so many unknowns in the landscape of education and youth development.

How do we create relationships with children and parents that are meaningful and authentic? How do we approach these relationships with intentions for it lasting a lifetime?

The longevity of doing this work for 27 years doesn't make KU's day-to-day tasks any easier. If anything, the clarity that comes with KU's history reveals how our work is only becoming more challenging.

We have to adjust operations more often and more rapidly to keep pace with the latest societal and cultural forces. We have to raise our voices above digital media's distractions, engage kids' attention, respond to their needs and always adapt.

Looking back on KU's innovations in education and youth development, it's clear that our strength is sparking kids' interests to create communities of inclusion. KU has always been a place of belonging to something bigger than ourselves.

That's why we need YOU and your support as we rededicate our mission to opportunities that empower kids to become leaders, to achieve social and economic equity, to better themselves while bettering their communities. This is how we grow the Unlimited.

KU laid the foundation in 2024 for the next generation of its youth development and engagement projects that will promote entrepreneurship and give kids vital workforce and life skills. Food for Thoughtfulness and Pastabilities Unlimited both build on KU's experience in job training, including our VIBES event promotions and EmpowerPrint custom screen-printing shop.

Efforts to engage entire households also grew in 2024, demonstrating the success of programs and systems developed in recent years. Under our parent-student contract, family volunteer and engagement hours increased by 137% in the first five months of the 2024-25 school year compared with 2023-24. The total number of families participating increased by an average of 88.75% during the same time.

These outcomes confirm KU's conviction that we can — and we will — integrate kids and families as shared participants in our mission. They reaffirm our belief in the Unlimited.

Thank you for always believing in them, and in us.

— Tom Cole, founder and CEO

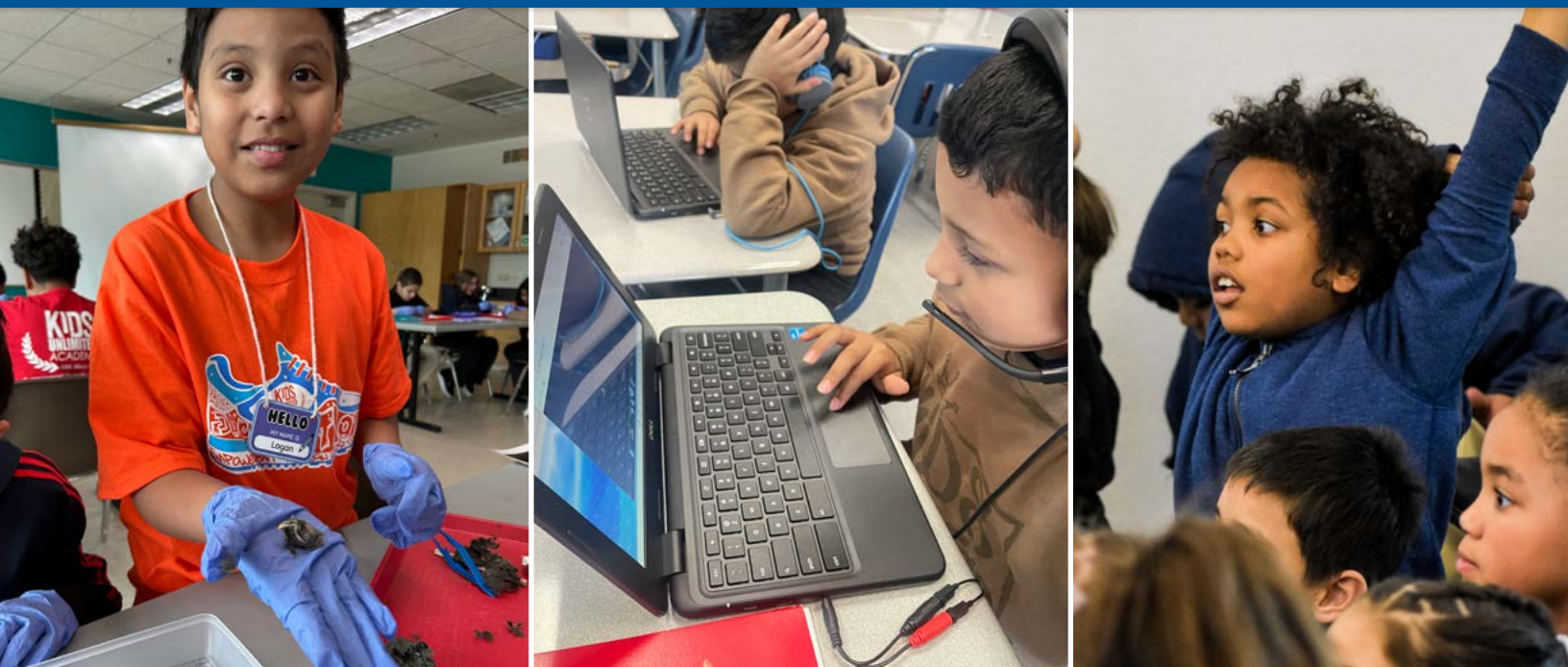
KIDS UNLIMITED 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

WHO WE ARE



KIDS UNLIMITED AT A GLANCE

STUDENTS IN PRE-KU EARLY LEARNING:	72
CHILDREN IN KU AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS AND CAMPS:	788
STUDENTS IN KU ACADEMY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL:	513
PARENTS IN KU FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAMS:	476
CLOTHING ITEMS DISTRIBUTED ANNUALLY TO KU PARTICIPANTS:	16,960
MEALS SERVED ANNUALLY TO KU FAMILIES AND OUR COMMUNITY:	238,592



We believe educational opportunities are for everyone — regardless of economics, background, race, gender or zip code.

This belief shaped Kids Unlimited, a grassroots program that took hold in 1998 at a low-income elementary school in Medford. KU founder Tom Cole upheld education and opportunity as the keys to overcoming barriers of language, culture and poverty.

KU's values, 27 years later, have become a community norm. We know the community cares about its children, but we are challenged every day to serve kids whose needs surpass available resources.

- Poverty, hunger and family instability are widespread among KU participants.
- Kids' adverse experiences and social-emotional delays require mental health treatment.
- KU families need wrap-around support, including job, housing and health care referrals.
- More than 70% of KU families are Latino, about half of those non-English speaking.
- Nearly one-third of students attending KU Academy are designated migrant.

WHAT WE DO

A nonprofit organization, Kids Unlimited relies on government and foundation grants, private donations, business sponsorships, community partnerships and fees for service. Our community's generosity ensures KU can provide these educational opportunities and social supports:

- **Afterschool programs** at eight of the highest poverty elementary schools in our region;
- **Math and reading assistance** that supplements students' regular school day with 20% more instruction;
- **Enrichment activities** in supervised, safe environments during out-of-school time, including after school, summer, winter and spring breaks;
- **A year-round public charter school** providing 30% more instructional time than Medford district schools;
- **10-hour structured school days** that embed enrichments in arts, music, culinary, sports and other programs often economically out of reach for KU families;
- **High-quality preschool and child care** for Southern Oregon's highest poverty families with a focus on kindergarten readiness, socio-emotional development and hands-on, active learning;
- **Highly qualified, diverse teaching staff**, many bilingual, who offer culturally competent programming;
- **Thousands of meals each day**, all cooked from scratch, often incorporating locally sourced produce and proteins;
- **"Free" services** to remove participants' economic and cultural barriers and ensure their access and equity.

SHAPING OPPORTUNITY WITH PASTABILITIES!



Pastabilities Unlimited is the latest youth engagement endeavor by Kids Unlimited, which aims to bring the project to the community this spring.

A recipe for developing students' culinary and workforce skills, Pastabilities Unlimited is one of the newest vendors at Medford's farmers market. Customers can purchase KU's freshly made artisan pasta Thursdays at Rogue Valley Growers & Crafters Market in Hawthorne Park.

Pastabilities Unlimited builds on KU's history of supporting programs with entrepreneurship — from event production to screen-printing. Culinary arts are the next discipline to empower students' experience of the business sector, from product innovation to distribution and marketing.

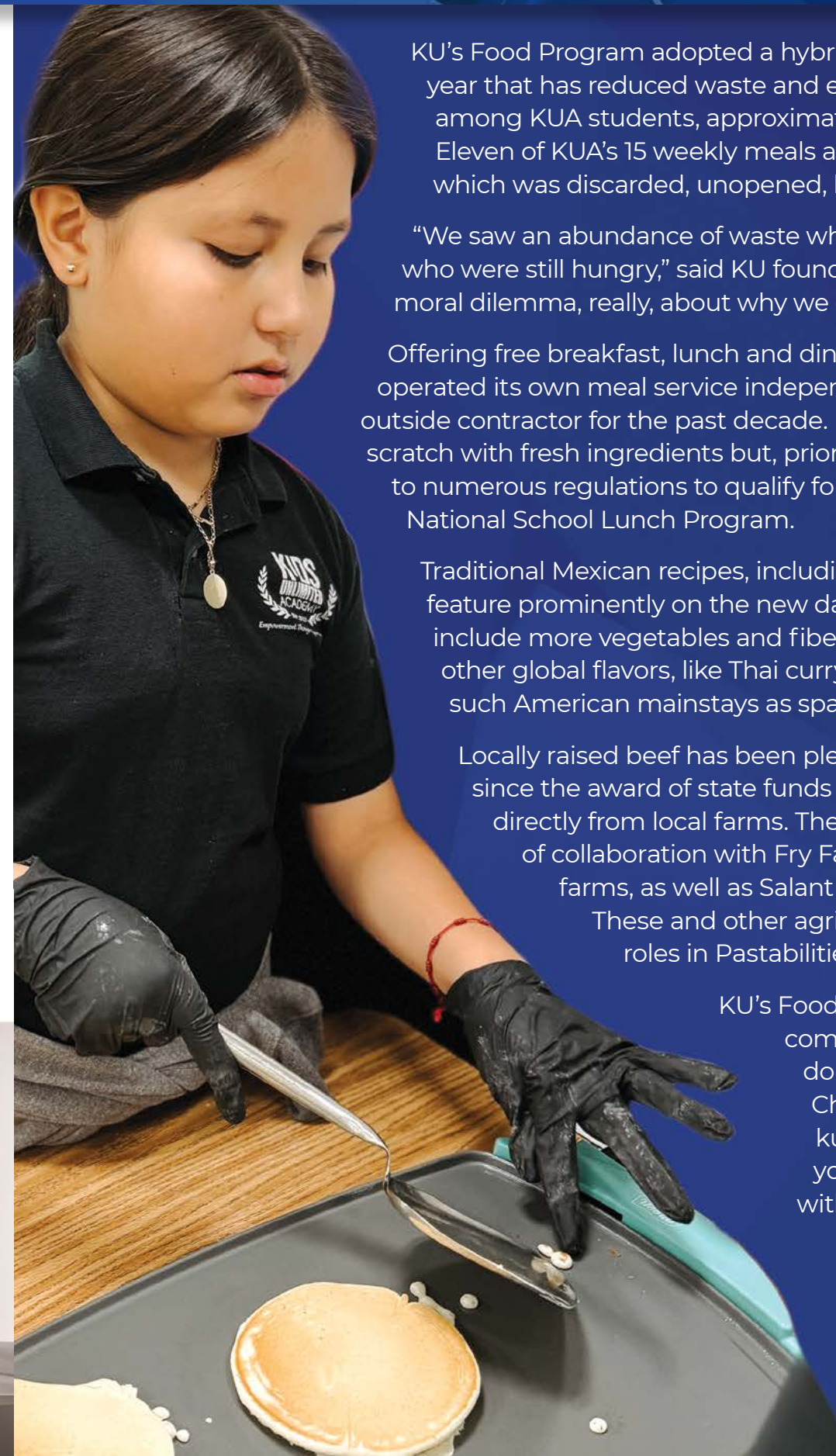
Fresh pasta dough is the medium for students' creativity and shaping their business model. The project incentivizes students' volunteer labor toward gaining vital job experience that jumpstarts their post-secondary education resumes. A commercial pasta-making machine was purchased for the project with grant funds from Leightman Maxey Foundation.

Pastabilities Unlimited officially debuted at KU's Dec. 14 Hope for the Holidays benefit. Donors and supporters enjoyed a three-course meal featuring KU's small-batch pasta. The pasta's encore came Dec. 17, when everyone attending KU's Whoville Family Fun Night got a free portion of Grinch-green noodles in marinara sauce.

Supervised by executive chef Nathan Herbold, Pastabilities Unlimited intersects with KU's award-winning food program, students' health and nutrition instruction and parent engagement. Herbold has been testing the pasta in daily meals while simultaneously incorporating more locally grown and raised foods.



KU FOCUSES ON FOOD



KU's Food Program adopted a hybrid model for the 2024-25 school year that has reduced waste and enhanced cultural relevance among KUA students, approximately 70% of whom are Latino. Eleven of KUA's 15 weekly meals are no longer served with milk, which was discarded, unopened, by a majority of students.

"We saw an abundance of waste while not being able to serve kids who were still hungry," said KU founder and CEO Tom Cole. "It felt like a moral dilemma, really, about why we even created the Food Program."

Offering free breakfast, lunch and dinner to every student, KU has operated its own meal service independent of Medford School District's outside contractor for the past decade. KU kitchen staff cooks meals from scratch with fresh ingredients but, prior to the hybrid model, conformed to numerous regulations to qualify for reimbursement through the National School Lunch Program.

Traditional Mexican recipes, including enchiladas, pozole and tacos, feature prominently on the new daily menus with adaptations to include more vegetables and fiber and less fat. Those complement other global flavors, like Thai curry and Japanese yakisoba, and such American mainstays as spaghetti and cheeseburgers.

Locally raised beef has been plentiful in KU's Food Program since the award of state funds to purchase more ingredients directly from local farms. The approach builds on KU's history of collaboration with Fry Family, Rusted Gate and Ella Bella farms, as well as Salant Family and Plaisance ranches. These and other agricultural partners will play vital roles in Pastabilities Unlimited.

KU's Food Program innovation requires community support, including donations of food and funds. Check out the quarterly menu at kuaoregon.org/menu and pledge your support for wholesome food with a recurring donation.



SCAN TO DONATE

PARENTS GET INVOLVED



Parents were more involved at Kids Unlimited Academy in 2024, promoting equity among families and student success in school.

Family volunteer and engagement hours increased by 137% in the first five months of the 2024-25 school year compared with 2023-24. The total number of families participating increased by an average of 88.75% during the same time.

Parents' participation reached a peak in June 2024 with a total of 910 family hours spent attending Royals awards assemblies, as well as graduation ceremonies for KUA's kindergarten, fifth and eighth grade classes. With just over 1,600 total guests, KU's Whoville Family Fun Night kicked off the holiday season Dec. 17, 2024, as the single best-attended event of the year.

These events represent several school-based opportunities each month for families to fulfill volunteer hours required by KUA's parent-student-school contract. Parents also agree to uphold standards at home that support their students' education. Higher levels of parent involvement and engagement have been shown to promote students' higher academic achievement.

In addition to KUA Family Nights, monthly Site Council meetings are conducted with supporting materials in both English and Spanish. KUA's parent community, representing low-income Latinx families often restricted by citizenship, cultural and economic challenges.



TEST SCORES SOAR!

Kids Unlimited Academy students in 2023-24 demonstrated the highest rate of mathematics growth on state assessments among Medford's Title I elementary schools.

KUA's 13% growth in math moved KUA to the third best-performing elementary school, behind Jefferson and Roosevelt, up from sixth place among Medford Title I schools in 2023-22.

"It was a great increase for us," said KUA math instructional coach Cheryl Graham. "We were super excited about that."

With approximately 250 Latino students taking state assessments, KUA has the largest number of students within that demographic contributing to its scores. Graham notes that neither Jefferson nor Roosevelt have Latino students as the majority of their enrollment.

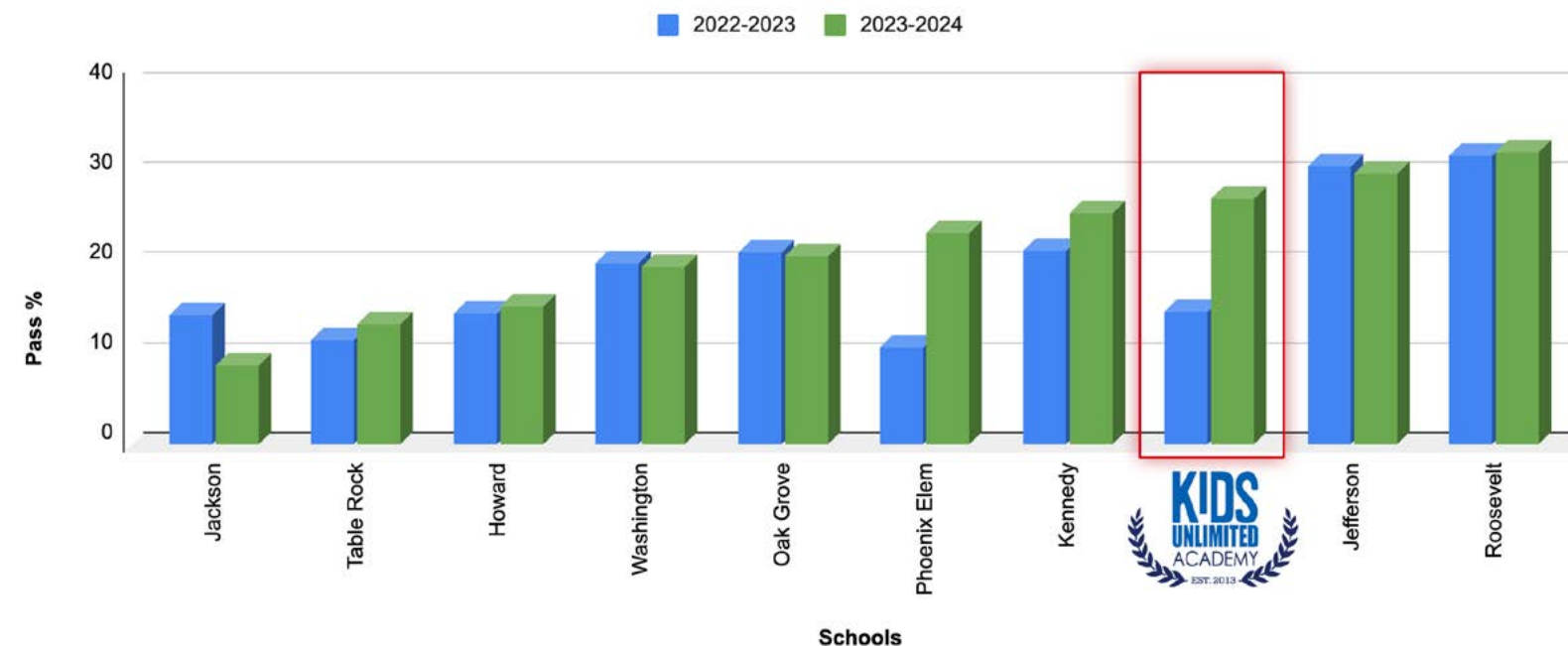
KUA far outperforms other local elementary schools — Jackson, Washington and Oak Grove — with similar student demographics in math. A number of factors, Graham said, contributed to KUA's math growth, including test prep binders for each grade, online tutorials, daily warm-ups, data meetings and other strategies. State assessments in math and English language arts are conducted in third through fifth grades for elementary students.

KUA's standing in ELA was more modest after 2023-24's state assessments, when five out of eight Medford elementary schools' scores dropped slightly. KUA leadership expected ELA scores to fall, said Graham, because KUA adopted a new curriculum in 2023-24. The fact that it fell by only a couple of percentage points indicates teachers were putting in additional effort, she said.

Among KUA students taking English language development, the school's percentage of students "nearly meeting" the English language proficiency assessment's standard held steady in 2023-24.

"It's an extremely hard test to pass," said Graham. "It's super challenging, super hard."

Math SBAC Scores all Grade Levels Included



PRE-K GROWS



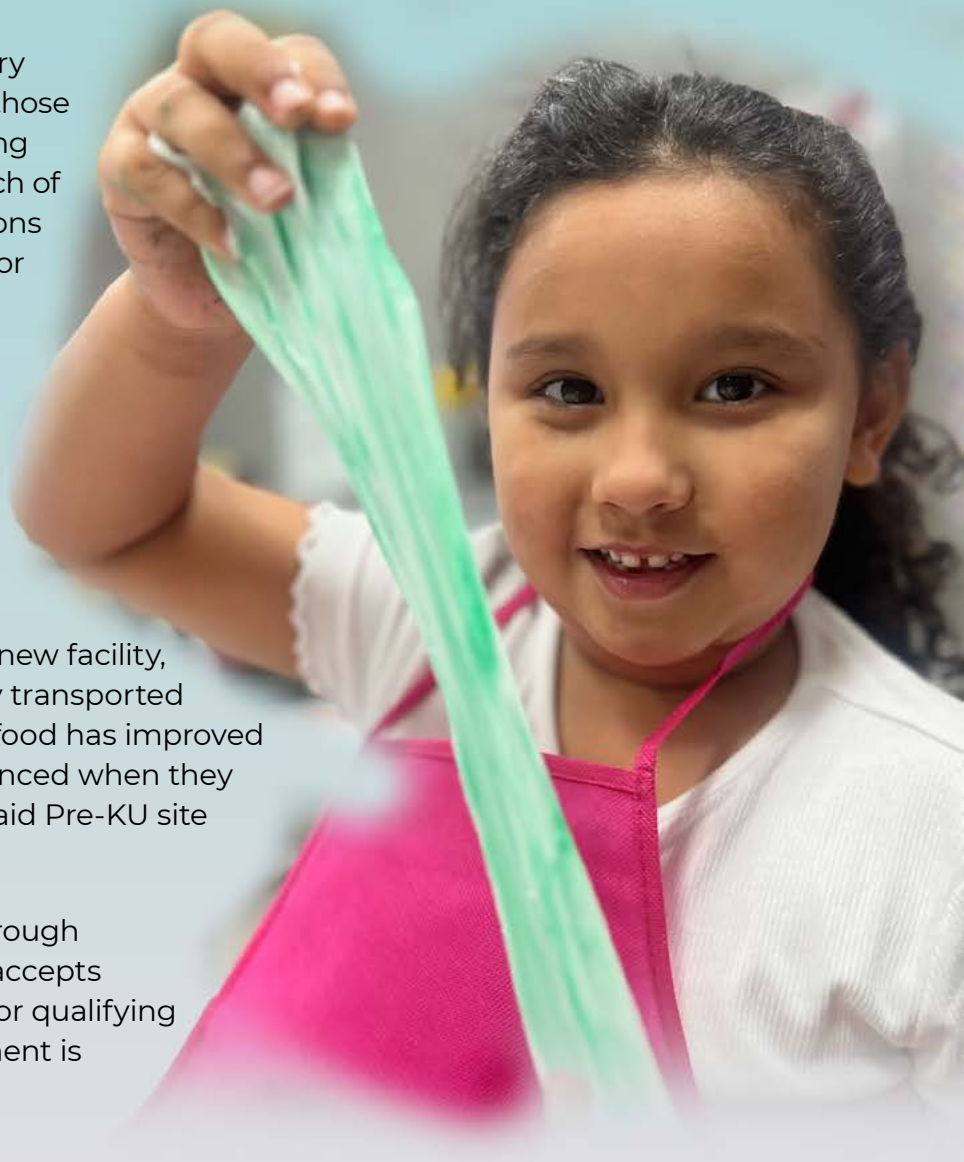
Opening a new Early Learning Center in White City, Kids Unlimited increased preschool access to art, drama, science, math and reading.

Approximately three times larger than KU's former preschool about two miles away, Pre-KU Early Learning integrates spaces for art, library, circle time, dramatic play and sensory exploration in every classroom. Previously, those developmental domains were shared among preschool classes, allowing less time for each of those activities and requiring more transitions from space to space, which is challenging for young children, said Pre-KU staff.

Pre-KU's four classes each have 18 students and three staff. With 72 students and 20 total staff, Pre-KU's ratio is far better than the state requirement of 10 children in this age group per staff member.

Pre-KU also gained its own kitchen at the new facility, which opened in summer 2024. Previously transported from KU's central kitchen in Medford, the food has improved in quality, and the kids' appetites are enhanced when they smell their breakfast and lunch cooking, said Pre-KU site manager Betty Goodson.

More than 75% of students are enrolled through Oregon's Preschool Promise. Pre-KU also accepts Employment Related Day Care subsidies for qualifying families, as well as private pay. Pre-enrollment is available online at kuoregon.org/pre-k



MORNING ENRICHMENT



Scheduled before school, KU Academy's enrichment activities also promote classroom preparedness.

KUA students — Starting at 7:30 a.m. each school day — participate in a range of academic- and arts-focused enrichments. Some of the options are dance, martial arts, musical theater, media production, game design, screen printing, trivia, Spanish, garden, crafts, movement with Gemineye and science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics projects. Student surveys determine what's offered, and grade groups rotate among enrichment staff throughout the week.

"I have noticed a boost in student confidence and sense of well-being," said KUA Director of Educational Services Lupita Vargas.

"As students get dropped off, they eat their breakfast at their own pace while having a conversation with their peers ... then plugging into a morning enrichment group."

New for the 2024-25 school year, enrichment moved from after school to allow for KUA's later start time — 9 a.m. Administrators aimed to decrease tardiness, ease families' transportation to school and create more time each morning for classroom readiness. The schedule is designed for working families, said Vargas, who utilize KUA's extended day in lieu of child care.



Arriving more than an hour early for school is the goal for KUA students, all of whom receive breakfast each school day. Students have the option to attend morning enrichment, which is not tied to academic standards.



"Students are given a space to tap into their creative side," said Vargas, "whether it is creating another KUA TV news clip or creating handmade keychains and bracelets."

KU founder Tom Cole characterizes morning enrichment as a "buffer" between home and school life. "Creating a welcoming transition," the period allows staff to "meet and greet" students, who are more capable of calming down and settling into the school day.

KUA enrichment costs \$200 per month, and scholarships are available to KUA's predominantly low-income families. To make a donation, go to kuoregon.org/donate



LADY PANTHERS



The Lady Panthers' state basketball title represented a win for South Medford High School, Kids Unlimited and the community alike.

"They did it on the biggest stage in Oregon," said KU founder and Lady Panthers head coach Tom Cole. "They proved everyone wrong because they believed in themselves."

These Oregon champions also are champions for Southern Oregon youth. Their volunteer work includes KU enrichment programs and coaching and mentoring the next generation of players for Lady Panthers Hoops Club.

Involving many KU alumni, Lady Panthers Hoops Club earned nationwide recognition in 2024 from Women's Sports Foundation. Selected as a partner in WSF's Community Sports 4 Life Program, Lady Panthers Hoops is one of 50 organizations across the country that received grants to continue building confidence, self-esteem, perseverance and leadership among historically underserved girls.

Lady Panthers' 2024 state champs were among South's most highly diverse teams — two African American players, two Native American players, one Pacific Islander and Latina Kim Ceron-Romero, now a freshman at California's Menlo College. Dozens of Lady Panthers under Cole went on to play college basketball, the majority of them on scholarships, including the first Latina awarded an NCAA Division I basketball scholarship, Yaremi Mejia.

During Cole's tenure, the Lady Panthers claimed three 6A state titles in 2012, 2021 and 2024. They were tournament runners-up in 2013, 2014 and 2023.



SO OPEN IS IN ITS 17TH YEAR



Southern Oregon's premier basketball tournament comes to the region's largest indoor sports venue May 10-11.

The 17th annual Open, in partnership with the City of Medford, is among the largest events hosted at Rogue Credit Union Community Complex. Approximately 200 teams from across the West Coast and Nevada will take to Rogue X's eight basketball courts, as well as several Medford school gymnasiums, including Kids Unlimited.



"It's one of the biggest basketball tournaments in our Pacific Northwest region, and best of all — 100% of the proceeds are dedicated to ensuring vulnerable kids and families have opportunities to participate in education, arts, sports and access to healthy meals," said Tom Cole, KU's founder and chief executive officer.

Boys and girls in grades 5-12 compete for titles in their respective divisions. This annual KU benefit, sponsored by Lithia & Driveway, continues the spirit of the inaugural event founded in 2007 by Kyle Singler.

A South Medford High School alumnus, Singler incorporated his love of basketball with his senior project. Singler went on to lead Duke University to an NCAA national title and played for seven seasons in the NBA.

With nearly 2,000 participants and 10,000 spectators projected, the Open also has a significant economic impact locally. Tournament organizers and industry insiders forecast it will bring more than \$1 million in revenue through hotel bookings and other hospitality and tourism sales generated over the weekend. See unlimitedbball.org



SCAN TO
LEARN MORE

RKT'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY

STORIES OF HOPE

An encore to Royal Kids Theatre's regular season kicked off summer for Kids Unlimited.

Performing arts students present a revue of RKT's past musical productions in June 2024 at KU's Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts. The show commemorated a decade of RKT.

Scenes and musical numbers revisited "Annie Jr.," "Freaky Friday," "Willy Wonka" and "The Big One-Oh! Jr.," KU Academy performing arts students stage two shows each year: a murder-mystery dinner theater in the fall and a musical in the spring.

Being a part of the theater company gives KUA's third- through fifth-grade students the opportunity to work together in a variety of capacities, said teacher BriAnna Johnson. Students spend several months learning choreography, lyrics and acting techniques for the spring show. For the fall show, students also work as servers, learning to be professionals, she said.

Support KU's performing and visual arts by making a donation at kuoregon.org/donate



SCAN TO DONATE



"I started volunteering at Kids Unlimited in 2004 as a freshman at Rogue Community College. Volunteering as a mentor at Washington Elementary School afterschool program opened my eyes to the harsh realities that many of our youth face on a daily basis.

"I had been fortunate enough to be raised by both my parents: my dad worked, and my mom chose to stay home to raise her children. I had a stable upbringing with supportive parents who attended my school and athletic activities. I always had home-cooked meals, a warm bed and stable housing. Naively, before volunteering at the afterschool program, I thought every child had that.

"I realized some of the kids were in foster care, had a parent or both in

jail or lost to drugs, unstable housing and abuse. Kids Unlimited was the only place for the kids to feel safe and protected. The KU afterschool program offered meals, caring staff and a safe place to be. That is why I quickly became an employee — to be a support to the kids and help make their lives a little easier.

"I worked at Kids Unlimited as an afterschool staff member at Washington and Oak Grove Elementary, as well as summer camps, then at Vibes Main One concerts and events, for basketball seasons manning the door, in many capacities for 10 years until I completed school and earned my nursing degree.

"I serve on the KU Academy school board, and I will always be an advocate for KU and KUA schools because I know we are invested in creating a safe environment for kids in our community and helping to shape and mold productive citizens.

"I will forever be grateful to KU for opening my eyes and my heart to see the needs of the people in my community and to do my part in helping to create change and opportunities to level the playing field for everyone."

— Larissa Medina, Kids Unlimited Academy board member

STORIES OF HOPE



"I am a KU alumnus and one of the first cohorts of Latino schoolchildren to participate in KU's afterschool pilot program at Oak Grove Elementary. My siblings — Lupita, Javier, Daniela — and I are beneficiaries of this program and credit KU for playing an integral role in our childhood development.

"Now as a Ph.D student in Education Leadership at the University of San Diego, I'm aware of the herculean effort and intentionality that Tom and everyone at KU played in creating a better future for Latino students in Southern Oregon. KU became a beacon of hope and a safe haven for my peers growing up.

"... As a first-generation Latino student, I struggled a lot. Juggling two languages and navigating a foreign education system was difficult. However, KU became the bridge that connected everything. At KU, I gained the social capital and confidence to take on the world.

"Dedication, hard work and a growth mindset are the virtues I walked away with from KU. When I graduated from South Medford High School in 2010 and was awarded a full academic scholarship to Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, I did not hesitate to take the opportunity. KU and Tom's mentorship prepared me to venture out and seek new opportunities.

"When you come from nothing, and someone sees value in you and develops it, you begin to feel like somebody. I still sing the Kids Unlimited song that we would chant to start every day of summer camp: When a Kids Unlimited kid walks down the street, he looks a hundred percent perfect from head to feet, and if you look at them it's quite a treat; hard to beat a Kids Unlimited kid."

— **Beto Vargas, doctoral student in leadership studies, University of San Diego**



OUR MISSION AND VISION: EQUITY TO EXCELLENCE

Twenty-seven 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 2025

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Amount I am donating today: \$ _____

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