LiFEsports™
at The Ohio State University®

2020–2021 Annual Review
MORE THAN CAMP.
MORE THAN SPORTS.
LIFE
The LiFEsports Initiative was founded on the belief that all youth deserve the opportunity to engage with caring adults in intentionally designed sport- and recreation-based activities. Our priorities have always focused on promoting positive youth development through sport - especially among youth who are most socially vulnerable. This focus, however, became even more important throughout 2020 and 2021.

With COVID-19 sweeping the globe, most sports across the world and in Central Ohio were halted. LiFEsports had to quickly reimagine our sport-based programming for a world where in-person activities were no longer the norm. June 2020 through May 2021 looked a lot different but still stayed the course. Here we invite you to learn about how LiFEsports transformed to ensure that socially vulnerable youth still had access to sport during these stressful times. As we look forward, we are filled with optimism for a year where in-person sport returns! Our young people will need these prosocial opportunities especially post-pandemic.

Sincerely,

JEROME DAVIS, PHD
Executive Director – Service/Outreach

DAWN ANDERSON-BUTCHER, PHD, LISW-S
Executive Director – Teaching/Research

REBECCA WADE-MDIVANIAN, MSW, LISW-S
Director of Operations
To prepare youth for life and leadership through sport.

To be the national exemplar in sport-based positive youth development programming.

Since 2009, LiFEsports has grown to address the ever-changing needs of our community’s youth and the field of sport-based positive youth development (PYD). Today, LiFEsports is nationally recognized as a premier model for sport-based PYD. We strive to address the broader social conditions young people face, especially those exposed to various social vulnerabilities and are most at-risk. Our Initiative’s focus on teaching has continued to impact the sport-based PYD field by developing tomorrow’s workforce, and our research demonstrates how sport can make a difference in the lives of young people today.

WHO WE ARE

MISSION
To prepare youth for life and leadership through sport.

VISION
To be the national exemplar in sport-based positive youth development programming.

OUR GOALS

Service & Outreach
Provide quality sport-based positive youth development programming, especially to youth from vulnerable circumstances.

Teaching & Learning
Prepare and train tomorrow’s sport-based youth development workforce.

Research
Research and share best practices in sport-based youth development.
LiFEsports has had a stable presence in Central Ohio for the last decade. In 2020-21, our key programs, however, shifted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we offered the following programs: ‘Sport in a Bag’ Virtual Camp, LiFEsports Summer Camp at the Beatty Community Center, a virtual Youth Leadership Academy, and the 6th Grade Central Ohio Virtual Leadership Program. With COVID-19 cases dropping in the Fall of 2020, LiFEsports began to offer in-person sports clinics with modified activities that ensured youth safety. In all, we directly served 666 kids from 58 zip codes in Central Ohio during 2020-21 in spite of COVID-19! Most sport and PYD programs were non-existent due to the pandemic.

OUTREACH TO SUPPORT HEALTHY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

2020 LiFEsports PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

LiFEsports WAS “IN THIS TOGETHER” WITH OUR YOUTH & FAMILIES

- 48 Virtual Chalk Talk sessions provided to 481 youth
- 170 Individual sport instruction videos created and viewed 9,616 times
- 39 days of in-person summer programming provided to 51 youth at the Beatty Community Center
- 15 YLA Virtual Sessions provided to 59 youth
- 18 Virtual Parent/Caregiver Support Sessions
- 6 Virtual Sessions of 6th Grade Leadership Program provided to 73 youth
- 275 youth contacts through virtual and in-person sport clinics
- In partnership with the Lindy Infante Foundation, 7,000 ‘Sport in a Bag’ distributions - each kit contains a basketball, soccer ball, or football, along with a jump rope, cones, and home instructional guide
OUTREACH TO SUPPORT HEALTHY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

BY THE NUMBERS

666 YOUTH SERVED

RACE/ETHNICITY

- Black: 68.9%
- White: 14.6%
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 3.4%
- Multiple Races: 11.3%
- Other: 1.8%

FEMALE (49.5%)
MALE (50.5%)

AGE

- 9 & under: 26%
- 10-12: 42.4%
- 13-15: 23.1%
- 16+: 8.5%

WHAT WE TEACH

- Self Control
- Effort
- Teamwork
- Social Responsibility

67.2% live in or near poverty threshold

58 zip codes

216 different schools

30 school districts

23.9% attend Columbus City Schools

YOUTH SERVED

13-15: 23.1%
10-12: 42.4%
9 & under: 26%
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LiFEsports SUMMER CAMP TRANSITIONS TO SPORT IN A BAG VIRTUAL CAMP

Unfortunately due to the COVID-19 pandemic, youth programming was not allowed on the Ohio State campus during the summer of 2020. The pandemic didn’t stop us! The LiFEsports team quickly pivoted our summer camp programming and created a virtual summer camp experience called, ‘Sport in a Bag’ Summer Camp.

The idea for our ‘Sport in a Bag’ virtual camp grew out of a partnership with the Lindy Infante Foundation. During the height of the pandemic, the Lindy Infante Foundation and LiFEsports partnered to distribute bags of at-home sports gear to low income youth. Each bag included a jumprope and either a basketball, football or soccer ball, as well as a LiFEsports At Home Instructional Guide inclusive of Chalk Talk (social skill development) and sport activities for youth to complete at home. In total, 7,000 Sport in a Bag kits were distributed between April 2020 and August 2020. LiFEsports built upon this successful kit development and distribution concept to create the first-ever virtual LiFEsports Summer Camp! Essentially we took our traditional in-person curricula and offered the program online.

The ‘Sport in a Bag’ Virtual Camp was made possible by funding from the Lindy Infante Foundation, Columbus Recreation and Parks, and the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority. During this six week virtual camp, 481 youth received new camp sports equipment every two weeks, attended virtual Chalk Talk social skills sessions twice per week, and accessed to over 144 virtual sports exercises to complete at home. These sport exercises were made possible by former OSU athletes (Henderson Days), current OSU coaches (Kim Dally-Badgeley), community coaches (Mike Marshall and Matar Faal), and current and past social work students (Sara Henderson, Lena Aprile, and Trina Phillips).

In addition to the programming, youth received incentives for the completion of activities (such as OSU ballcaps, camp t-shirts, water bottles, etc.) and engaged in weekly Q&A sessions with “Celebrities” such as NBA star and past Buckeye and NBA player Michael Conley Jr., WNBA coach and past Buckeye Katie Smith, and several OSU student-athletes (i.e., Master Teague, Shaun Wade, Josh Wade, Alec Yoder, etc.). While we couldn’t bring the kids to campus, we were able to bring LiFEsports to the kids during the summer of 2020.

OUTREACH TO SUPPORT HEALTHY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES
PROGRAM STATISTICS

481 total youth enrolled (28.8% previously participated in camp)

S.E.T.S. Outcomes

Virtual LiFEsports campers still grew in S.E.T.S.! The following chart showcases the impact 2020 ‘Sport in a Bag’ Summer Camp had on youth.

2020 ‘Sport in a Bag’ Virtual Summer Camp impact on youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Camp</th>
<th>Post-Camp</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-control</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>+.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>+.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>+.25*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Responsibility</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>+.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * indicates significant at = p < .05. Scale scores range from 1 to 5. Data are from the group of virtual campers who participated in 75-100% of the chalk talk sessions.

Healthy Lifestyles/Sport Competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-Camp</th>
<th>Post-Camp</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sport Competence</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>+.19*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Healthy Lifestyle Score</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>+.23*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * indicates significant at = p < .05. Scale scores range from 1 to 5. Data are from the group of virtual campers who participated in 75-100% of the chalk talk sessions.

As a Result of Attending LiFEsports...

- 73.2% said they can better control my feelings (SELF-CONTROL)
- 89.3% reported that they learned to always give their all (EFFORT)
- 75.0% said they are better at working in a team (TEAMWORK)
- 80.4% reported they try to do the right thing when no one is looking (SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)
- 86.5% said they learned to act responsibly when playing sports (IN SPORTS)
- 83.3% said they use S.E.T.S. in their school, home, or community (IN LIFE)

Note: Percentages reflect those selecting one of the top 2 levels of agreement for the group of campers who participated in 75-100% of the physical activity sessions.

Past research shows that the LiFEsports Summer Camp is most effective for youth who need it the most (i.e., those youth with the poorest social skills coming into camp). For campers with room to improve...

- 57.0% increased in social competence!
OUTREACH TO SUPPORT HEALTHY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

LiFEsports+ AT BEATTY COMMUNITY CENTER

While campus was shutdown during the summer of 2020, our community program at the Beatty Community Center still operated in-person, but only at 50% of 2019’s capacity due to COVID-19. With commitment from our funders, the Lindy Infante Foundation, Columbus Recreation and Parks, Urban Strategies, Inc., and the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, LiFEsports provided camp programming to 51 youth (78.4% living near or below the poverty line). This camp provided youth a safe place to engage in 10 different sports for 7 weeks over the summer. The LiFEsports team worked to ensure all sports allowed for social distancing, but that youth still engaged in physical activity and learned the fundamental skills of each sport. Campers at Beatty also participated in 15 hours of Chalk Talk social lessons and 4-H programming such as gardening, art and science. Summer at Beatty’s LiFEsports+ program was a blast, and served such a great need in the community during the COVID-19 pandemic given all else was shut down.

PROGRAM STATISTICS

51 total youth enrolled

As a result of attending LiFEsports...

- 82.1% said they learned to get along with others (TEAMWORK)
- 89.3% said they learned to act responsibly when playing sports (IN SPORTS)
- 78.5% said they use S.E.T.S. in their school, home, or community (IN LIFE)
- 100% said they are more physically active at home (HEALTHY LIFESTYLES)

Note: Campers attending at least 1 day of camp (N=51) who responded. Percentages based on those selecting one of the top 2 levels of agreement.
LiFEsports CLINICS

LiFEsports clinics are offered each year during the academic year for youth who participated in LiFEsports Camps the previous summer. These clinics allow LiFEsports to maintain caring, positive relationships with our youth and provide additional learning opportunities for the youth. We call these “booster sessions” as they also serve as follow-up lessons that reinforce S.E.T.S. learning and application. Just like everything else in 2020, LiFEsports had to modify these sport experiences because of the pandemic. Over the course of the year we hosted 5 in-person and 6 virtual clinics.

In addition to clinics for youth, LiFEsports hosted monthly parent/caregiver support sessions. These sessions originally included in the ‘Sport in a Bag’ Virtual Summer Camp were extended throughout the school year to provide needed support for families as they adjusted to the demands of parenting throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

PROGRAM STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 IN-PERSON CLINICS</th>
<th>6 VIRTUAL CLINICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>Football</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacrosse</td>
<td>Strength Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Track &amp; Field</td>
<td>Dance &amp; Yoga</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participation
Youth attending at least...

1 clinic – 115  2 clinics – 45  3 clinics – 14  4 or more – 7
Clinics may have looked a lot different in 2020-2021, but one thing is for certain, we couldn’t have touched the lives of so many youth on multiple occasions without our strong partnership with Columbus Recreation & Parks. Our 5 in-person clinics were located at Columbus Recreation & Park’s Beatty and Adams Community Centers. Each clinic was offered twice per day in two locations (4 times total). This allowed LiFEsports to maintain small group sizes for safety while also ensuring the same number of youth were served in past years! To also ensure youth safety, activities and games were selected that allowed for social distancing and individual skill development. Skills competitions were integrated in each clinic as a fun way to compete without playing the actual game! Although things may have looked much different, we are thankful we were able to continue serving our campers and families!

While LiFEsports wasn’t able to engage OSU student athletes in in-person clinics and programming due to safety concerns, our soccer athletes stayed involved by helping LiFEsports facilitate our virtual soccer clinic. In October, Coach Brian Jankowski, the Assistant Coach for the Ohio State Women’s Soccer Team and three of their current players, Talani Barnett, Isabel Rodriguez and Marissa Birzon helped demonstrate and record soccer drills for our youth. Our youth were able to watch these drills online and then record themselves completing a few of the drills on their own. Coach Jankowski shared activities that they do at practice to help better their athlete’s soccer skills, as well as explained how the athletes used S.E.T.S. in each of the drills. We always love being able to learn from college athletes and and hearing about how they incorporate S.E.T.S. into their everyday practices!
LiFEsports YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The LiFEsports Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) prepares high school-aged youth for college and careers. The program expands upon the important skills taught at LiFEsports by giving past summer campers who are now in high school the knowledge of what it takes to be a leader at LiFEsports and in their community. Youth participate in bi-monthly education and mentoring sessions throughout the academic year. Also, all juniors and seniors received monthly mentoring sessions focused on college readiness, applications and admissions processes. In 2020-21, the YLA was held entirely through virtual sessions. Unfortunately Youth Leaders were not able to join us for summer programming. This transition though didn’t stop our youth. To offset this missed summer experience, youth did engage in a service project together.

PROGRAM STATISTICS

59 total youth enrolled (aged 14-18)

• 75% of youth participants reported “I am confident I could get accepted into college.”
• 100% of youth participants reported “If I go to college, I know that I can graduate college.”
• 100% of high school seniors enrolled in the YLA graduated from high school. 2 out of 3 seniors are enrolled for college in the Fall of 2021.

TIA ELDER

A decade ago. That’s how long it’s been since Tia Elder’s first summer at LiFEsports. In 2012, Tia first entered the program as a wide-eyed nine year old. She was always one to make it known her love of basketball, often trying to find ways to stick around longer to help the basketball coaches and steal a few more minutes on the courts. Throughout her six years at camp, Tia emerged as a natural leader and friend to all. Her natural leadership ability (along with her love of the LiFEsports and basketball) led Tia to the YLA. Tia reflected on her journey with the YLA:

“The YLA has taught me not only how to help the youth but how to take care of myself and be helpful in my community. I learned how to be a better leader than I already was. I was taught how to make a resume, and how body language can either get you a job or make the company not want you. As well as I learned how to work with others even if you have a problem with them. I loved it there and I loved the friends I made in the program. All the coaches as well. I’m definitely going to miss it. I want to be a coach. LiFEsports and the YLA have lead me in the right direction.”

While Tia will miss being a LiFEsports youth leader, she is excited to continue her educational career at Columbus State University where she will be pursuing a degree in Coaching. And don’t think LiFEsports won’t be recruiting her to join our staff team next summer! She’ll be a tremendous counselor!
6TH GRADE LEADERS

The 6th Grade Leadership of Central Ohio program works to illuminate similarities and appreciate differences among youth from different communities in Central Ohio. It brings together a cohort of students from Hamilton and Windsor STEM Academies in Columbus City Schools and Davis, Grizzell, Karrer, and Sells Middle Schools in Dublin City Schools. Our LiFEsports team led the curriculum development and implementation efforts, but sessions were facilitated collaboratively by leaders with leaders from Columbus City and Dublin City Schools.

Students work collaboratively year round to learn leadership and citizenship skills, as well as plan and execute a service project. Skills learned in 6th Grade Leaders include self-control, effort, teamwork, social responsibility, empathy, confidence, influence, and passion. In April, Linden’s 6th Grade Leaders put the skills and values they learn to practice for their culminating service project and volunteered at St. Stephen’s Community House. The group distributed 100 personal protective equipment kits to individuals driving through the meal distribution line. Youth in Dublin participated in multiple service activities (such as cleaning up a local park and making cards for a nursing home). All 6th Grade Leaders demonstrated social responsibility and promoted health and safety in their community.

PROGRAM STATISTICS

73 youth participants

As a result of attending LiFEsports...

• 89.7% agree that they will “use the leadership skills I learned to help others.” (TEAMWORK, SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, & EMPATHY)
• 76.9% agree that they are “more eager to serve my community.”
NEW PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: LIFESPORS IS EXPANDING TO LINDEN COMMUNITY CENTER

Due to LiFEsports+ successes at the Beatty Community Center, LiFEsports and Columbus Recreation & Parks expanded LiFEsports+ to the Linden neighborhood during the summer of 2021. This program was made possible through funding from Franklin County Jobs & Family Services, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, CRP, and Huntington National Bank.

The Linden community was selected as the second site for LiFEsports+ due to the need of youth and families in the community. Linden, located northeast of Downtown Columbus, is more highly-impacted than the city average in many data indicators. The median household income is $23,934, and the average unemployment rate is 12.8% (as compared to the city’s rate of 4.8%). Our efforts align with the City of Columbus’ priorities related to the One Linden Plan.

While the need in Linden is evident, this community is home to a state-of-the-art recreational facility. The Linden Community Center, which was finished in 2021 after a $25 million investment from the City of Columbus, houses two full-size basketball courts, a fitness room for gymnastics, a 200-meter elevated walking track, a game room, a demonstration kitchen, an art/ceramic room, recording studio, a wellness clinic, outdoor sport courts, a splashpad, and playground equipment.

During the summer of 2021, LiFEsports utilized this fabulous facility to engage 65 youth in our sports-based youth development programming. 100% of youth served by this program were living in poverty. Only 12.2% of youth attending this program had previously attended a LiFEsports program, indicating that this expansion allowed for LiFEsports to reach additional youth in the Columbus community. During this 8-week program, youth learned the fundamentals of baseball/softball, basketball, football, lacrosse, soccer, tennis, ultimate frisbee, and volleyball. Of course, they also received all 15 lessons of Chalk Talk to teach S.E.T.S. There was lots of action going on at the Linden Community Center through LiFEsports+.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Statement</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81.4%</td>
<td>said they learned to get along with others (TEAMWORK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.1%</td>
<td>said they learned to act responsibly when playing sports (S.E.T.S. IN SPORTS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>said they use S.E.T.S. in their school, home, or community (S.E.T.S. IN LIFE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>said they are more physically active at home (HEALTHY LIFESTYLES)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Campers attending at least 1 day of camp (N=63) who responded. Percentages based on those selecting one of the top 3 levels of agreement.
PREPARING TOMORROW’S SPORT LEADERS

LiFEsports works year-round to provide teaching and learning opportunities to undergraduate and graduate students at Ohio State. In 2020-21, LiFEsports’ students engaged not only from Ohio State but also from the University of Georgia, University of New Hampshire and Ohio University. Students from a variety of majors took part in classes, independent studies, field practicum, volunteer work, internships and employment opportunities related to LiFEsports. Our goal is to prepare tomorrow’s leaders for the field of sports-based PYD and beyond. In 2019-20 numbers of students engaged in LiFEsports Initiative were reduced due to COVID-19.

TEACHING BY THE NUMBERS

Total number of Students Engaged: 79

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Student Engagement</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coursework: Social Work 2110 – 56 students</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Internships – 5 students completed internships required for their majors in sport industry, social work, psychology, and nursing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Employment – 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Volunteers – 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Athletes – 9</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Due to COVID-19 restrictions, student involvement was limited in 2020 for the safety of the OSU students and LiFEsports youth.)
Trina Phillips wasn’t new to the world of working with vulnerable youth when she joined the LiFEsports team. In fact, Trina had over 21 years working for Young Scholars at Ohio State. Her work in Young Scholars and interactions with low-income, diverse youth led her to pursue a Master’s degree in Social Work. It was this degree that led her to LiFEsports.

During the summer of 2020, Trina needed to complete her social work field placement as one final requirement to graduate. Luckily for LiFEsports, Trina was matched with our program. This placement, however, was unlike any other we had ever had - this placement was entirely virtual. Trina met her degree requirements by serving as a virtual Chalk Talk leader during our ‘Sport in a Bag’ virtual camp. Additionally, Trina, a certified Zumba teacher, recorded lessons in Zumba for all our youth to complete at home in the program. Her energy and enthusiasm in these videos made them a hit for both youth and parents!

“LiFEsports is fun! I know I sound like one of the kids but that is the truth. The activities that I facilitated and the connections I made with the kids and families will be memories I hold in my heart always.”

- Trina Phillips

Claire Sobecki first joined LiFEsports during the summer of 2019 as an undergraduate research fellow. Since then, we can truly say Claire has done it all. Her research fellowship resulted in her first paper titled “The Retention of Youth in the LiFEsports Positive Youth Development Program.” Following this initial research experience, Claire decided to serve as a camp counselor during the summer of 2020 at the Beatty Community Center. She then completed her social work field placement with Windsor STEM Academy where she actively supported 6th Grade Leaders Program. This wasn’t enough for Claire though, throughout 2020-21 academic year, Claire became a program facilitator in the YLA. After graduation with her Bachelor’s in Social Work in May of 2021, Claire will return to Ohio State to obtain a Master’s degree in Social Work.

“My work with LiFEsports has allowed me to develop a thorough understanding of all that goes into youth programming from the research that informs the program design to the day-to-day of supporting youth at summer camp. Most importantly, though, it has taught me the importance of building positive relationships. Whether it be with supervisors who serve as strong mentors, peers to learn and grow alongside of, or youth of all ages, I have seen the powerful work that can be done when people believe in one another.”

- Claire Sobecki
DISCOVERING WHAT WORKS

What makes LiFEsports stand apart from traditional sports-based camps and youth development programs is its specific focus on understanding how and why programs and sports impact youth. Each year LiFEsports works to engage faculty, staff, and students from both OSU and partner universities in our research agenda. No matter where the program is located, others can learn from our work.

Like everything in 2020, research had to be modified in different ways due to virtual programs, social distancing, and other challenges. Thanks to modifications made at Ohio State, LiFEsports was still able to collect data from our programs to further our sport-based youth development research. 2020 gave our team additional time to write and publish from past research data sets. We are proud to have been so productive during this year and thankful for the contributions of our many students, faculty, staff, and research partners.

RESEARCH BY THE NUMBERS

Total number involved in Research and publications connected to LiFEsports:

- 5 PhD students, 2 master’s students, 5 undergraduate students from 4 different disciplines
- 14 faculty research partners from 11 different universities
- 7 staff from OSU involved in data collection, management, analyses and dissemination efforts
- 3 community partners from 2 different organizations
- 2 conference proceedings in the Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology
- 6 peer-reviewed virtual presentations at national conferences hosted by the Society for Social Work and Research, the North American Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity Association, and the National Center for School Mental Health
- 2 community virtual presentations, one for the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa and the other as a Lunch & Learn at the NCAA

“I have been so grateful to work with Dr. Dawn Anderson-Butcher and the LiFEsports team to explore the intersection of sport and recreation on social capital in rural Appalachia. I have gained invaluable experience in the research process and look forward to translating my work into my graduate studies and future career in social work.”

– JESSIE HARTMAN

In 2020, LiFEsports was the proud to be named a 2020 Project Play Champion by the Aspen Institute. This national award showcases the commitment of LiFEsports to both outreach in our community and engaged scholarship and research.

The Project Play Champions program recognizes local and national organizations that are taking new, meaningful, and specific actions consistent with Project Play’s vision of “an America in which all children have the opportunity to be active through sports.” To learn more about Project Play, visit: https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/
Over the past year, Jessie Hartman (undergraduate at Ohio University) and Taylor Broermann (social work graduate student at Ohio State) completed theses related to sport-based youth development. Both of their studies focused on social relationships and experiences in sport. Jessie and Taylor are currently writing both studies up for publication, but here’s a quick snapshot of what they found!

Jessie’s thesis explored the extent to which the inclusion of a sports/recreation center in a rural community would contribute to relationship building and social capital. To study this, Jessie completed qualitative interviews in Appalachian Ohio where a state-of-the-art sport and recreation center was recently opened. Her study demonstrates how sports centers can build social capital through bonding community members and organizations together, bridging groups of people to foster relationships, and linking youth and families to resources. This social capital led to assets such as increased social network density, improved resources and programming, as well as the creation of reciprocity and trust.

While Jessie’s thesis looked at the impact of a center, Taylor’s study focused on the impact a team can have on individual belonging and social identity. For her study, Taylor completed qualitative interviews with girls on a high school cheerleading team. Study findings concluded that participation on this high school cheer team contributed to personal and social development and participants’ desire to achieve. The participants also reported on ways in which coaches, teammates, parents, and the structure of the sport, in general, all contributed to their social identity, overall self-esteem, and confidence in sport, at school, and in life.

The Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, which showcases research focused on social work practice with children, adolescents, and their families, is highlighting the field of sport-based youth development in a special issue to be published in August of 2021. Dr. Dawn Anderson-Butcher and Dr. Samantha Bates (previous LiFEsports Ph.D. student and current faculty member at Texas Christian University) were invited to serve as special issue editors. In addition to their role as editors, LiFEsports faculty and staff contributed three articles to this special issue. These articles include:

- Social Work and Sport by Dawn Anderson-Butcher and Samantha Bates
- Social-Emotional Learning Interventions in Youth Sport: What Matters in Design? by Dawn Anderson-Butcher, Samantha Bates, Anthony Amorose (LiFEsports Faculty Affiliate from Illinois State University), Rebecca Wade-Mdivanian (LiFEsports staff member), and Leeann Lower-Hoppe (former LiFEsports Ph.D. student and current Ohio State faculty member and LiFEsports faculty affiliate), and
- Psychological Processes Involved in Life Skill Transfer: Understanding the Lived Experiences of Youth Recognized as Being Socially Vulnerable by Tarkington Newman (former LiFEsports Ph.D. student and current faculty member at the University of New Hampshire and LiFEsports faculty affiliate), Dawn Anderson-Butcher, Kendra Bostick (University of New Hampshire student), and Sandra Black (University of New Hampshire student).

LiFEsports was honored to serve in both leadership and contributor roles for this special issue that clearly is central to the work of the initiative.
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