

PRESS RELEASE



AFCRA Awards Nearly \$1M to 140+ Atlanta Metro Area Organizations at 2026 Play It Forward Champions Awards Reception

ATLANTA – The Atlanta-Fulton County Recreation Authority (AFCRA) held its inaugural **Play It Forward Champions Awards Reception** yesterday, April 16, at the Loudermilk Conference Center, where it awarded **\$948,500** in grant funding to more than 140 organizations. The 2025-2026 campaign and grant cycle marks a significant milestone, with completed applications having increased by nearly 120 percent, demonstrating both heightened community need and growing trust in AFCRA’s investment strategy.

“The response was overwhelming. This exceeded our expectations,” said **Kerry Stewart**, Executive Director of AFCRA. “Yet, it confirms what we already knew: Creating space, expanding access to recreation, sports, wellness, culture and arts charts pathways to success. We’re just doing our part to help ensure that access to these building blocks isn’t determined by someone’s circumstances.”

Through the Play It Forward Grant, AFCRA invests in organizations already doing the work to provide access and strengthen communities across Atlanta and Fulton County. Said **K Whitner**, chairman of the AFCRA Board of Directors, “Our Champions Awards Reception brought together nonprofit leaders, civic stakeholders, and partners for an evening dedicated to celebrating impact and recognizing those advancing meaningful work across the community. I couldn’t be prouder of what we accomplished here tonight.”

Last night’s program included a video message from Mayor Andre Dickens, two youth keynote speakers, and other key recognitions, including the **Game Changer Award** given to Atlanta little league football legend and grant recipient **Coach Tim Wynn**. “Man, I can’t thank AFCRA enough for everything they [have] done for me and these kids,” says Wynn, founder of ATL Vikings. Wynn has coached over 3,000 youths since the 1980s, leading them to 29 championships in 36 years—including 10 national championships.

From college scholarships to the pros, 36 of his players made it to the NFL and two to the NBA. “I’m grateful that I’m able to give these kids something positive to focus on, to keep them out of trouble. They had to keep up their grades too. No pass, no play,” Wynn continued. “I wouldn’t have been able to do half this stuff—get uniforms, transport kids to championships, pay for food—without AFCRA and ‘the Man upstairs.’ My program saved more lives than Grady [hospital]!”

A full list of all grant recipients can be viewed at www.afcra.com. AFCRA will continue to build on this momentum through its forthcoming (501(c)(3)), which expands philanthropic investment and deepen partnerships across the region.

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April 17, 2026

About AFCRA

The Atlanta-Fulton County Recreation Authority (AFCRA) stewards and activates premier public venues and invests in initiatives that expand access to recreation, sports, and cultural experiences. Through strategic partnerships and community-focused programming, AFCRA works to uplift communities, drive economic vitality, and position Atlanta as a leader in sports, recreation, and culture.

The AFCRA Play It Forward Grant is a signature philanthropic initiative that brings this mission to life —supporting organizations that expand access and opportunity across AFCRA’s three areas of focus: Recreation & Access, Sports & Entertainment, and Arts & Culture.

