



# SwingPals

## Impact Report

### 2021-22

*"The play box is the essential safe place for everyone and it varies depending on the person but for me it's a few seconds of relaxation and that helps by pushing me past my limitations." Kamere, Class of 2028*

## What's in your *Play Box*?

Dear *SwingPals* Family,

The *Play Box* is the safe space around us in which we possess the social and emotional skills and the self-awareness needed to make good choices and pursue our potential in life. Imagine coaching these skills to over 1,000 Durham public middle school children every year. We can and we do, thanks to you.



This past year, *SwingPals* added Rogers-Herr as our fifth Durham public middle school to our program. In doing so, we are moving one step closer to realizing our Vision that every Durham Public School student who lacks resources, many of whom have been marginalized, will have the opportunity to build their *Play Box* when they enter middle school (**see My *Play Box***). Every child, especially the underserved, should be given the opportunity to reach their full potential and live happy and joyful lives.

This past year we have witnessed the courage of our amazing students as they build their *Play Box* to embrace personal challenges, trust, and dare to want. Parents and caregivers share with us the changes they see in their child at home. Our students transition from being quiet, shut down, and often combative, to being open, sharing, and engaged. *SwingPals* students share their experience with family and friends and compete in healthy ways, not only in golf but by supporting others in school and in their community. Students work together for the greater good, becoming our future leaders and sharing their *Play Box* skills.

Perhaps the greatest shift we see is in the larger *SwingPals* community. We drive the paradigm shift that the children we serve are not broken and do not need fixing. As caregivers, volunteer coaches, school staff and administration, and *SwingPals* advocates, we must learn these skills too; to stop and listen so we can build our *Play Box* and ultimately to give our students a voice and the opportunity to pursue their life, unencumbered by the past or fearful of the future. As I look ahead, it is with great enthusiasm and optimism and the realization our children are leading the way which drives my passion.

I am grateful to all who make *SwingPals* possible.



Doug Hodges  
*SwingPals*, Executive Director and Founder

### Meet the *SwingPals* Parent Caregiver Engagement Committee



From left to right: Alexis, Lanita, Lois, Hope, and Marilu

“As a parent I see *SwingPals* helping children learn how to focus on the game and life and helping families get closer. In 3-5 years I see *SwingPals* in every middle school continuing to teach children how to use a *Play Box* and focus.” **Alexis Springer**

“While I have seen my son improve the management of his frustrations through *SwingPals*, what has warmed my heart is how much more comfortable he has become in social interactions. I would like to see *SwingPals* working with students at the Elementary school level. By the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade kids begin refining their coping skills and sometimes developing unhealthy ones. Learning Think-box/Play-box and heart-focused breathing, would help them develop productive coping skills.” **Lanita Wimberly**

“*SwingPals* is a good foundation for all young men. The concept of golf instilled in the participants will take them far in life, Think Box, Commit, *Play Box*. The *SwingPals* program should extend to all Durham middle schools as this program is valuable.” **Lois Pettiford**

“*SwingPals* will continue to provide alternative ways of thinking to children who otherwise may only learn to react to life vs respond. I enjoy when my son brings home new knowledge and ideas we get to discuss and put into practice as a family unit.” **Hope Taft**

“*SwingPals* impacts so many kids. Everything you do is amazing for the kids and their families. Keep doing what you’re doing and *SwingPals* will become much bigger - I’m so grateful for everything *SwingPals* has done.” **Marilu Rodriguez**

# SwingPals

## 2021-22 Board of Directors

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(retired)
- Ed Dudley, VP**  
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- Dr. Billy Mims**  
*Retired Educator*
- Robert Newman**  
*Master Public Policy*  
*Duke University*
- Cory Williams**

## Staff

- Doug Hodges, PGA**  
*Founder*  
*Executive Director*
- Brittany Johnson**  
*Program Development*  
*Coordinator / Coach*
- Natasha Ainsley-Thomas**  
*Golf/Mindfulness Coach*
- Brook Masters**  
*Business Manager*
- Gail Mclamb**  
*Transportation*

# My Play Box



*"I use my Play Box at school. Do my think box first, step back and think about what you're going to do then step into the Play Box ready and prepared."*  
**Bryan, Class of 2025**



*"In my Think Box I plan meticulously and carefully. I envision the shot and take a practice swing. I put a song in my head that matches my tempo of the swing I need to take. I take a deep breath, step into my Play Box and swing."*  
**London, Class of 2028**



*"The Play Box is when you are getting ready to hit your golf shot - it helps me keep positive emotions when I'm moving there from my think box - it helps me stay calm."*  
**Amil, Class of 2023**



*"The Play Box is a space where you are capable of being in control of your emotions and focusing on your task like playing golf. My Play Box is a space where I can be engaged in any task and staying calm while playing golf or in life."*  
**Jeremiah, Class of 2028**

*"The Play Box is my mental safe place. It doesn't have to be just on the golf course. You can apply it anywhere. When I'm going through problems and I'm frustrated, it helps me calm myself, it's my safe space."*  
**Logan, Class of 2023**



*"The Play Bbox is where you let go of all you are thinking, let everything go and just imagine what you want to do."*

*It helps me by just letting go of my feeling and imagine something good I wanna feel. I let go of my stress and just imagine something good."*  
**Justin, Class of 2027**

**POWERFUL**

**EXCITED CARING**

**COMPASSION PROUD**

**PEACEFUL COURAGEOUS**

**FUN FOCUS HAPPY**

**RESPECTED SAFE FREE**

**KINDNESS CONTENT**

**VALUED LOVING**



*"My Play Box is my target, where I want the ball to go. My Play Box helps me know where the ball will go and how exactly it will happen."*  
**Maurice, Class of 2025**

*"The Play Box is your safe space where you do not think about what bad things may have happened that day. It helps me put things behind me and focus on my goal or what I want to do. You can use it everywhere you go like when you are stressed about a test you can calm yourself down and think about what you want to do to do better on that test."*  
**Aiden, Class of 2028**



*"The Play Box is when you hit a golf shot but it can be used in any part of your life. It helps me because it calms me and makes me feel comfortable where I am. For me, the Play Box is where I feel confident that I can do anything."*  
**Tristan, Class of 2028**



*"The Play box is where I make things happen that you want to achieve. When I say I want to get a 100 on my test, I use my think box and my Play Box to follow through on that goal."*  
**Ty, Class of 2027**



*"The Play Box is your safe box, it helps me by focusing and hitting my best shot. It is good for the community, so we can be safe."*  
**Deon, Class of 2028**



*"My Play Box is where you can put what you think about from your think box and put it into play. For example, I don't think as much as I should so that helps me a lot, like when I'm doing tests because it allows me to think about my answer before I do it. For me it is a space where I can get away from others and think about my actions."*  
**Houston, Class of 2028**



*"When I'm in the Play Box I just play golf and imagine what I want to happen. It's where I can let go of everything and play golf. Golf has also helped me with everyday activities, school, work, and working on relationships."*  
**Yedith, Class of 2023**

*"To me, the Play Box is the part of the shot where you really have fun. After coming out of the Think Box, my mind is clear and ready to take my shot. If I do have anything on my mind it's the feeling I decided to use going into my shot. It can be confidence, determination, or maybe happiness."*  
**Leyah, Class of 2023**



# Welcome to the Team - new *SwingPals* Leadership

## Meet Brittany Johnson, *SwingPals* Program Development Coordinator/Coach

As the *SwingPals* Program Development Coordinator, I'm responsible for developing effective programs in both the golf and social emotional space. My greatest goals at *SwingPals* are to increase caregiver engagement, student enrollment, and delivering our program in impactful ways. I am also responsible for training staff and volunteers in *SwingPals* methodology so students learn skills they can use outside of our program. I believe if everyone is provided with the knowledge and tools we coach at *SwingPals*, our students will be incredibly successful and attain what they want in life.

I'm highly skilled in communication, adaptability, problem solving, leadership, teamwork, and goal setting. These skills, in conjunction with my passion and desire to lead and support children who lack resources by helping them develop healthier thought patterns resulting in positive behavior, ideally positions me to lead *SwingPals*. From my own personal journey of self-development and applying what I've learned through coaching and courses such as HeartMath's Building Personal Resiliency Certification, Transformation Life Coaching, Holistic Health and Wellness, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, I'm uniquely qualified to help our students and families work towards creating a healthy and happy life.



## Joining Brittany on the *SwingPals* leadership team are new Board Members:



### Dr. Billy Mims

It is with pleasure that I serve on the board of *SwingPals*. As a board member I have the opportunity to provide input on new initiatives that positively impact our Durham Community. Additionally, I get the opportunity to give back and serve my community. And for that I am grateful.



### Lanny Ealey

"My value to *SwingPals* is directly attributed to my motivation to ensure kids that look like my family have access to the game and its lessons. As an African American man, I began to wonder how access could have improved the lives of kids I grew up with or younger members of my family. I am proud to be a part of *SwingPals* because of the wonderful people that drive the organization and the incredible families we serve."



### Neil Harrington

"*SwingPals*' mission to teach mindfulness and social-emotional regulation skills to students in Durham Public Schools motivates my service on the board. As a board member, I will contribute to analysis and interpretation of survey data to assess *SwingPals*' programmatic impact. surveys I hope my background in data analysis and evaluation will be an asset toward these ends, and I am looking forward to my service."



### Cory Williams

*SwingPals* is doing the hard work to make a difference in the community, providing opportunity for students to develop their emotional intelligence and how the express themselves. *SwingPals* makes the difficult task of understanding your emotions a little easier by introducing a sport that is not familiar to the students we serve. I am proud to be a part of the change I want to see in the community I am a part of.

## New *SwingPals* Staff Members



**Brook Masters, Business Manager:** "My responsibilities include ensuring the organization institutes systemized policies and procedures and meets its financial goals and obligations, as well as grant writing."



**Gail McClamb, Transportation:** "*SwingPals* is a great organization. The coaches teach golf and how to control emotions, helping students to think before they act. My son was in *SwingPals* and he absolutely loved it."



### Natasha Ainsley-Thomas, *SwingPals* Golf/Mindfulness Coach.

I gained my experience and knowledge of golf and mindfulness as a student-athlete at North Carolina Central University playing competitive golf at a NCAA Division 1 level. This experience allows me to connect with students and contribute to the *SwingPals* Vision and Mission. As a black woman from another culture, my unique perspective ideally positions me to coach the marginalized public-school children as well as help *SwingPals* students understand the importance of building their *Play Box* and trusting that their best effort is good enough.

The work we do in *SwingPals* has a lasting impact on both our students, coaches, and our families. The depth we create in the coaching program, allows students and coaches to gain a greater understanding of the *Play Box*. Each skill we introduce is relatable to a life skill, presenting the opportunity for essential conversations to occur to encourage personal growth. I believe strongly in the "*we learn from each other*" culture that *SwingPals* promotes and am so proud of how students and coaches work together. I'm excited to see how they use these skills to reach their full potential in life.

# Fun times at *SwingPals*

Social and emotional coaching, encouraging self-awareness, building personal resiliency and emotional regulation skills, these are all necessary components that must be developed to establish a *Play Box*. This work is at the foundation of *SwingPals*. It is hard work, difficult and challenging. It is therefore essential we provide our students with fun and competitive outlets to enjoy while sharpening their mindfulness skills. This past year was no exception!

## Summer Camp - July 2022



**Four weeks summer camp: clockwise: Week 1; Ja'Zaria and Maliah, Science Museum, Jarod; Week3; crafts, and stretching!**

## SwingPals PGA Jr League - June 2022



**Left-Right: High School 1st Place Fred / 2nd Esbeyd Middle School 1st Place Tristan / 2nd - Houston Coach Derek celebrating with his students**

## Toastmasters and North Carolina Central University College Visit

**Left-Right: Students gather with grad students for their tour of NCCU International speaker, Sharon Hill, hosts SwingPals fist-ever Toastmasters series**



## Bulls, Hurricanes, and Special Events



**Left to Right Clockwise: Kamere, Rasean, and Deon; Bryan: Deon with Coach Josh; Daniel; Jady; London; Freddie; Jazmine; Xoie; and Justin**

**Left-Right: Students receive HV3's donation to SwingPals; Hodges accepts a check from Dave Pottenger thanks to the Hope Valley CC; Students and families at the Hurricanes**



# The Jordan Nicholas Jeter *SwingPals* Scholarship Program



*SwingPals* Executive Director, Doug Hodges, met Jordan in October 2003, becoming his “Big Brother” through Big Brothers Big Sisters. Jordan, pictured here with Doug and his sons, enriched Doug’s life each and every day they were together. Jordan went on to become a *SwingPals* Board member in 2017, helping Doug lead the organization he inspired Doug to found in 2010. Jordan served on the Board until his death earlier this year. We all miss him terribly, however, Jordan would want us to celebrate his life with us; to share his love, his joy, and his authenticity, with the young people who will follow in his giant footsteps.



In Jordan’s honor, *SwingPals* students who graduate high school and move on to higher education, will be eligible to apply for up to \$500 spending money each year. Scholarships will be awarded to those students who have been committed to the *SwingPals* program and demonstrate a desire to share their skills with their peers. Jordan’s leadership of *SwingPals* and our students will now continue in perpetuity. His scholarship fund will assure this is the case. Thank you to all who donated to Jordan’s scholarship program.

## *SwingPals* Annual Dinner and Awards



*Left to right clockwise: Due to crowd size we had to rent a tent; Hodges presenting; crowds; Coach Cory presenting to Leyah - Most improved; Yedith - Leadership; Esbeidy - MVP; Freddie - Coaches; Dr. Billy Mims - Coach of the Year.*



***SwingPals* Hall of Fame:** Special thanks to newly inducted *SwingPals* Hall of Fame members: **Steve Morton**, Founding Board member and *SwingPals* President, 2010-2016; **Jandy Doyle**, Founding Board member for her service as *SwingPals* Secretary, 2010-present; **Karl Kimball**, PGA, General Manager, Hillandale Golf Course, for opening his door and his heart to *SwingPals*, 2012-present; and to the late **Jordan Jeter**, Board member, 2017-2022, for his leadership.

## Dr. Billy Mims - *SwingPals* Coach of the Year

I am honored to be named the 2021-22 *SwingPals* Coach of The Year. Students come to *SwingPals* with lots of curiosity. The students do have a level of trust in me because I am a volunteer coach at *SwingPals*. I see and feel their anxiety when they come to the golf course. *SwingPals* coaches must earn students' trust. How-



ever, our students are also curious. Students watch me and see how I interact with their schoolmates. They are all eager to try something new.

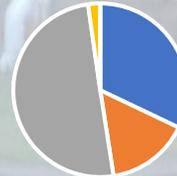
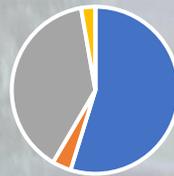
A *SwingPals* Volunteer Coach has multiple functions. We are teachers, mentors, role models and leaders. At times we are just very good listener. Notice I did not mention being a good golfer. That’s on purpose because at *SwingPals* golf is used as a means to an end, to help students develop their mindfulness and emotional regulation skills.

The most impactful service as a *SwingPals* Volunteer Coach is for me to ensure students are safe. Second only to safety is to allow our students to have **FUN** where **MISTAKES** are **CELEBRATED** and used as great learning opportunities.

**FY22 \$305,000**  
(9/1/21 - 8/31/22)

**FY21 \$219,000**  
(9/1/20 - 8/31/21)

**FY20 \$223,000**  
(9/1/18 - 8/31/19)



Foundations  
Corporations  
Individual  
Events  
Other

**SwingPals** is grateful to the following organizations and individuals who have generously contributed to our financial growth over the past 3 years.

Largest contribution in any fiscal year used to establish giving level  
Only gifts received on, or prior to 8/31/2022, end of last fiscal year, are included  
FY2020 individual giving includes \$40,000 donated to buy food through the *SwingPals Food Assistance* program

**\$25,000 and above:**

Earl and Margaret Chesson  
Endowment Fund  
Hodges Family Foundation  
Thomas S. Kenan III  
The Corporate Partnership for  
Nonprofits – COVID19 Fund,  
part of the Duke Durham Fund

**\$10,000-\$24,999:**

The Carolinas Golf Association  
Duke-Durham Fund for COVID-19  
Emergency Relief  
Falls Village Member's Group  
The Grable Foundation  
Dan and Susie Hill  
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Peter and Prudence Meehan  
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Trust Company of the South  
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**\$2,500-\$9,999:**

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Deborah Besinger  
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Julie Bryce  
Andrew Burns  
Keena Byrd  
James Canosa

Continued over:



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(continued):

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