

New York City youth get 120 new coaches with Laureus USA charitable program

Mercedes-Benz and the Laureus Sports for Good Foundation team up to train and place 120 coaches in underserved neighborhoods of New York City.

In the last two years alone, \$3.5 million has been cut from school sports budgets across the nation. That leaves 16.5 million youth with little to no access to sports activities, putting them at increased risk of childhood obesity. But all five boroughs of New York City will soon get 120 new sports coaches in 15 sports-based youth development projects thanks to a collaboration between the Laureus Sports for Good Foundation USA and Mercedes-Benz USA.

Laureus USA, a charitable organization that supports projects to improve the lives of American youth through sports, has selected Coach Across America to train coaches and place them in sports-related youth projects in underserved neighborhoods in New York as well as Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami and New Orleans.

Childhood obesity is a growing problem across the United States, with an estimated 33 percent of American youth overweight or obese by third grade. In New York City, one in five kindergarten children is obese.

[A recent report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office \(GAO\)](#) confirmed that school sports opportunities have decreased in recent years and quality coaches are in short supply. With this new program, children and teens that no longer have access to sports programs at schools affected by budget cuts will not only get more physical activity, but also benefit from the positive influence that coaches can have in their lives.

"The positive influence coaches can have on today's underserved youth is undeniable," says James Kallusky, director of Coach Across America. "The generous support from both Mercedes-Benz USA and Laureus Sport for Good Foundation USA will allow Coach for America to both broaden and deepen its impact by providing new coaches in New York."

Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA) made a \$1.3 million commitment to fund the program, which kicked off in New York on June 21st, 2012 with a visit by dealer partners from MBUSA, employees from Laureus USA, elected officials and nine-time Olympic Champion Mark Spitz to Play Rugby USA.

“Mercedes-Benz USA and our dealer partners have a long tradition of supporting and giving back to our communities,” says Steve Cannon, president and CEO of Mercedes-Benz USA> “When you combine that with MBUSA's extensive involvement in high-profile sports events, this is an undertaking that really makes sense for us and provides a real benefit to youth across the country.”

In addition to encouraging more physical activity for kids and giving them access to coaches who can help motivate them to get better grades and live healthier lives, the program also provides employment opportunities, relevant experiences and scholarships to young adults. Many of the coaches hired by Coach Across America are college graduates from the local community. They will be placed in youth development programs like Beat the Streets, City Soccer in the Community, Nike Camp Skate, Row New York and the United Youth League.

The national kickoff for the program took place in Chicago in April, and the remaining cities will launch later in the year. Overall, the program will place 250 coaches in 125 local communities, benefitting 40,000 youth.