



STEP AHEAD







2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Hello, and welcome to Step Ahead!

When Step Ahead began as “Bear Cubs Running Team” in 2015 at Washington University in St. Louis, the goal was basic: to resolve an absence of athletic programs for children with autism. Three years later at the national level, we have seen the incredibly deep impacts that the program has not only on the children, but on siblings, parents, and college student-athlete volunteers. The true influence of Step Ahead can be seen in the feedback from parents, who reported an increase in their child’s self-confidence, ability to make friends, and enjoyment of physical exercise.

This has been a pivotal year for the growth and development of Step Ahead. In 2018, we:

-  Launched three new Step Ahead Chapters- at MIT, Santa Clara University, and Rhodes College- expanding our reach to more children and their families in 5 total states
-  Signed with a fiscal sponsor to receive tax-exempt status while applying for our own 501(c)3
-  Recruited, trained, educated, and empowered 200 college student-athlete volunteers
-  Raised \$5,000 to establish and expand college chapters



“ Bear Cubs has been a constant that we have grown to depend on to provide a sense of belonging for our child ”

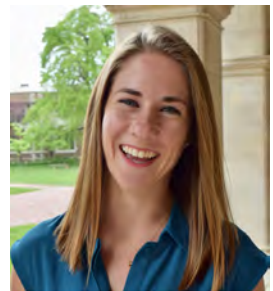


Step Ahead has demonstrated that our programs serve a very unique need not being met elsewhere, are highly scalable, replicable, and sustainable, and have proven social and physical impact. With your continued support, I am confident that we can provide athletic opportunities to more of the million children in our country who have autism.

With Gratitude,

Annie Marggraff

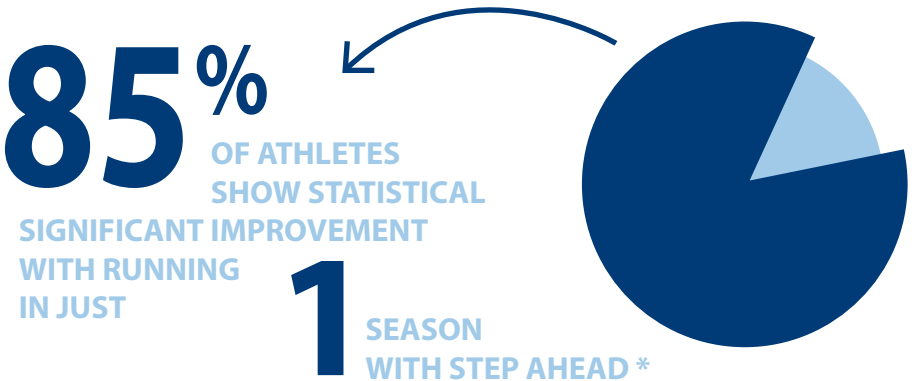
**Founder and Executive Director,
Step Ahead**



ATHLETES

Step Ahead is developed specifically for children with autism, using evidence-based methodology to best serve its athletes. Both children with autism and their typical developing siblings participate in weekly athletic practices, improving their physical ability and self-confidence simultaneously.

Running is consistently a top-recommended sport for children with autism. It requires less complicated communication and coordination skills than standard sports (soccer, basketball), while still offering a team environment. The repetitive, predictable nature of running is calming, and aerobic exercise has been shown to reduce stereotypic behaviors. By participating in 400m "time trials", children are able to make tangible and measurable improvements in their running times.



* Recently published in the Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry



“ My son’s self esteem and interest in a sport to channel his energy have greatly increased. ”

“ The healing power of running and being a part of a team does wonders for children with autism ”

“ We can’t tell you the positive impact this program has had on our family ”





COACH REFLECTIONS:

“ I have gained the ability to communicate much better with children, be it verbal or nonverbal, and I am no longer intimidated to talk or interact with someone who has a disability. ”

“ I learned to trust that I was making a difference for my athlete even though he doesn't communicate in the same ways as other kids. I think the major connection between us is that we both simply like to run! ”

COACHES

For many college student-athletes, performing significant weekly community service is not feasible given their busy academic and athletic schedules. Step Ahead resolves this issue by creating an on-campus, low-time commitment, high-impact volunteering opportunity on weekends. Chapter directors gain entrepreneurial leadership experience while founding a team on their college campus. By volunteering just 1 hour a week, student-athletes gain deep knowledge of autism, expand communication skills, and develop EQ.

UNIQUE



COACHING MODEL

— WITH —

90%

**COACH RETENTION
SEASON TO SEASON**

COMMUNITY

Community development is a key value of Step Ahead. A frequent lack of opportunity to become integrated and involved in community events hinders children with autism from growing to be the most well-adjusted, productive, independent citizens possible. The social isolation that a child with autism experiences can transfer to family members as well. Step Ahead Chapters provide a welcoming, supportive environment in which parents can meet, share resources, and form friendships. Step Ahead Chapters break down the “bubble” between a college campus and the surrounding community, facilitating connections and meaningful relationships between community members and college student-athletes.

The capstone experience of each Chapter’s season is the team’s participation in a local mile or 5K fun run race. The team’s participation in this open community event achieves the program’s goals of integration, family involvement, and athletic participation.

**END OF SEASON RACE
INTEGRATES ATHLETES INTO
LOCAL RUNNING COMMUNITY**



“ I realized that I am not alone with some struggles with my child. I have been able to talk and make friends with other parents involved in the program. ”

- Step Ahead Parent

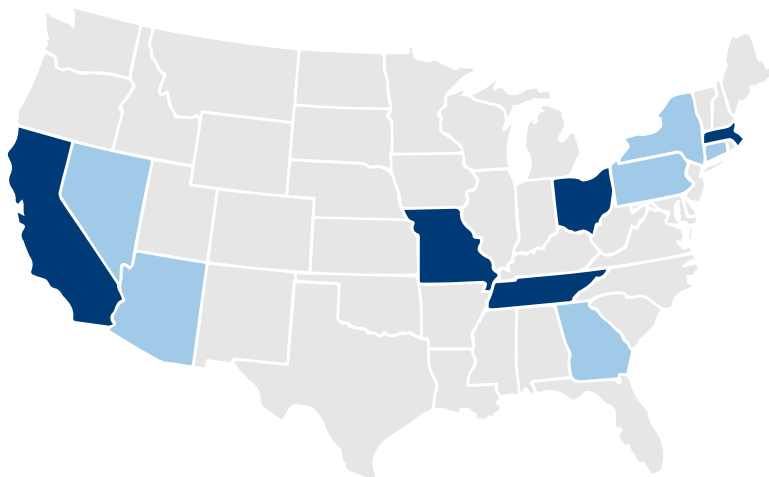


GROWTH

There are approximately one million children with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the United States. We want to provide every one of these children the opportunity to join a Step Ahead Chapter.

Step Ahead is in the process of applying for 501(c)3 tax-exempt status.

We already have coast-to-coast presence, with Chapters at Washington University in St. Louis, Case Western Reserve University, Rhodes College, MIT, and Santa Clara University. Chapter expansion is planned throughout NAIA and NCAA schools and conferences across the country.

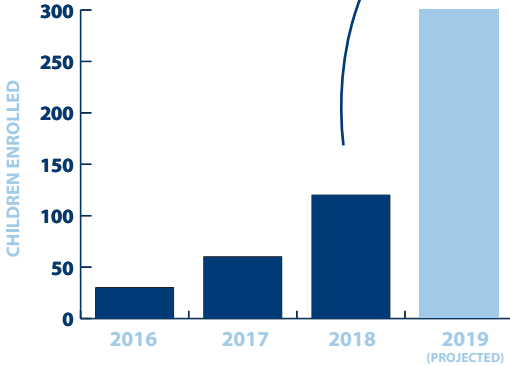


 **CURRENT CHAPTERS**

 **2019 EXPANSION**

BY THE NUMBERS:

5 CHAPTERS ESTABLISHED



15 PROJECTED CHAPTERS



“ What [Step Ahead] is doing is revolutionary and we only hope that it grows and spreads to other campuses in Missouri and beyond. ”

- Step Ahead Parent





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