

Community Connections: Brian Smith Shares How Orlando After-School All-Stars Develops Local Youth

Media Mention
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Brian E. Smith

Lowndes attorney Brian Smith currently serves on the board of directors of Orlando After-School All-Stars. In recognition of National Mentoring Month, Brian discusses how the organization is helping to develop the city's youth and build a better community.

When did you first get involved with the Orlando After-School All-Stars?

I started serving on the board of Orlando After-School All-Stars in the summer of 2017. One of my colleagues had been very involved and recommended that I check it out – and I was quickly sold!

What attracted you to this organization in particular?

Orlando After-School All-Stars plays a significant role in our city, building our community by serving over 5,000 students in local middle and high schools. By providing quality after-school programs for Orlando's youth, our students gain quality mentorship, athletic and tutoring opportunities. Programming, which include STEM-focused initiatives, educational resources, mentoring, fitness and lifestyle and financial empowerment, engages them in activities that will nurture and grow them – shaping them into the kind of adults who will then give back to our community in similar ways.

What are some of the most important activities/work that Orlando After-School All-Stars does?

In addition to developing our local youth, one of After-School All-Stars' most valued services is the peace of mind that it provides to the parents of our students. By providing quality after-school programming for our city's youth, parents can work full days and take employment opportunities that may have otherwise been unavailable to them. For a working parent, the After-School All-Stars programming provides them the assurance that once the school day is over, their kids are still safe and engaged in learning and athletic opportunities with mentors that care about their personal and educational development.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about Orlando After-School All-Stars [a specific program or event, or anything else]?

This has been a difficult year for all organizations, not just After-School All-Stars. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected our programming and altered our fundraising. In an ordinary year, our two largest events are Cows 'n Cabs (a Winter Park food and wine fundraising event created by John Rivers of 4R Restaurant Group and Dave Larue of ABC Fine Wine & Spirits) and our Kids Classic Golf Tournament. Both events were cancelled this year due to the virus, and it has been a challenge to backfill that fundraising.

In place of our traditional events, we have pivoted to hosting a virtual 5k, called Fresh Start 2021. All participants will get a race bib and a medal, but more importantly, participants can feel confident knowing their \$50 entry fee contributes to the long-term well-being of our city and its students. Registration for this important event is open through January 16, 2021.