



SYWACIA™ and the Louisiana High School Coaches Association partner to launch Louisiana Girls in Sport Leadership Platform

Statewide initiative connects high school girls with education, exposure, and pathways to careers in athletics

NEW ORLEANS — January 21, 2026 — So You Want A Career in Athletics™ (SYWACIA™), a leadership development initiative of the Marc and Kiki Barnes Foundation, has announced a new partnership with the Louisiana High School Coaches Association (LHSCA) to launch the **Louisiana Girls in Sport Leadership Platform**, a statewide initiative designed to expand career pathways for high school girls interested in the sports industry.

The partnership will provide Louisiana student-athletes and students who love sports with year-round access to leadership education, career exploration, and experiential learning opportunities that illuminate pathways beyond playing, including careers in athletic administration, sports marketing, media, operations, and executive leadership.

“At every level of sport, we talk about developing leaders, but too often girls are not shown what leadership actually looks like beyond the field,” said **Kiki Baker Barnes, Ph.D.**, founder and executive director of SYWACIA™. “This partnership with the Louisiana High School Coaches Association allows us to meet girls where they are, leverage the trusted influence of coaches, and intentionally build a pipeline of confident, prepared young women who see themselves as future leaders in sports.”

“At the Louisiana High School Coaches Association, our mission has always been about impact beyond the game. With a statewide reach that touches every corner of Louisiana, our coaches are uniquely positioned to shape not only athletes but future leaders. This partnership represents a powerful step in that direction, connecting education, opportunity, and mentorship in a way that extends far beyond competition and prepares young women for success in life and in leadership.” — **Jessica Barber**, Executive Director, Louisiana High School Coaches Association

A statewide platform for leadership development

Through this collaboration, SYWACIA™ and LHSCA will deliver a multi-phase leadership experience beginning in fall 2025 and extending through 2026. The platform will include:

- **Free digital community membership:** Open statewide to all Louisiana high school girls interested in careers in sport, featuring virtual sessions led by women professionals in athletics, career resources, and event updates.
- **Virtual learning series:** Monthly webinars focused on leadership development, networking, and career exploration, including National Girls & Women in Sports Day programming.
- **SYWACIA™ Sport Leadership Conference:** A one-day, in-person capstone experience featuring keynote speakers, interactive workshops, industry panels, and professional development labs. Participants will receive certificates of completion tied to LHSCA programming.
- **Volunteer and externship pipeline:** Hands-on learning opportunities for students to gain real-world experience through LHSCA all-star games, coaches clinics, and statewide events.

Coaches as champions, students as future leaders

The partnership positions Louisiana coaches as **Coach Champions**, empowering them to nominate students, share resources, and connect female athletes with leadership pathways beyond competition. In turn, LHSCA will benefit from a trained, motivated student volunteer pipeline for future events and activations.

“Coaches are among the most trusted voices in a young person’s life, and their influence does not end when the final whistle blows. Through this partnership, we are intentionally leveraging that influence to open doors, expand perspectives, and expose girls across Louisiana to leadership pathways beyond the field of play. This is exactly the kind of work that reflects who we are as an association and the lasting impact we strive to make. — Jessica Barber, Executive Director, LHSCA

Upcoming Information Session

To introduce the Louisiana Girls in Sport Leadership Platform, **SYWACIA™, and LHSCA will co-host a virtual information session** for coaches, parents, and students.

Information Session: Learn More About the Louisiana Girls in Sport Leadership Platform

Hosted by: Dr. Kiki Baker Barnes and Jessica Barber
Date: Thursday, January 22, 2026
Time: 7 p.m. CST
Registration: <https://bit.ly/LHSCA-26>

The session will provide an overview of the program, participation opportunities, and ways coaches and students can get involved.

Measurable Impact

Founded in 2018, SYWACIA™ has served more than 500 students across 26 states, with **97% of participants reporting increased career awareness** and **82% reporting increased confidence** in pursuing leadership roles.

“This partnership is not just a program it’s a commitment to equity, access, and leadership development,” added Dr. Barnes. “Together with LHSCA, we are ensuring that girls who love sports can clearly see and confidently pursue the path from passion to profession.”

About SYWACIA™

So You Want A Career in Athletics™ (SYWACIA™) is the premier leadership development community for girls in sport, operating under the Marc and Kiki Barnes Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. SYWACIA™ connects high school girls with mentorship, education, and professional networks that illuminate pathways to careers in athletics and develop leadership skills for any profession.

About the Louisiana High School Coaches Association

The Louisiana High School Coaches Association (LHSCA) serves and supports high school coaches across the state, promoting professional development, advocacy, and opportunities that enhance the educational and athletic experiences of Louisiana students.

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