



# SOUTHSIDE YOUTH DEVT. STRATEGIC VISION 2026-2029



## Equipping and Empowering Chattanooga's Youth Through the Game of Baseball



# A Letter from Our Executive Director

Dear Friends and Partners,

I still remember my first time volunteering with Southside Youth Development at the Emma Wheeler Field. I drove down the mountain from Covenant College with no idea what to expect and nothing with me except my baseball glove. Turns out, that was the only thing I would need to start making a connection with the kids. Although we had very different backgrounds we were united, standing on the same field with a shared love for a ball and a glove. From this starting point, deeper and more lasting connections formed.

The field at the Emma Wheeler Homes has been transformed from an overgrown, forgotten patch of land into the best youth baseball facility in Southside Chattanooga. Volunteers, community members, and youth have worked side by side clearing brush, laying dirt, and restoring hope one shovel at a time. To us, Emma Wheeler Field is more than a baseball diamond; it is a place of possibility—of what could be and what should be. Through baseball, it brings together people from many walks of life, united in a shared calling to inspire hope and belief in a child's life and to encourage lives of integrity and purpose.

That's what Southside Youth Development is all about: seeing what is often overlooked and doubted and believing in what is possible. We are rooted in the belief that all children have been created by God with dignity, value, and purpose, and we use the game of baseball as a conduit to help youth see and believe that for themselves.

Over the past several years, I've watched this organization grow from a promising idea into a proven model of youth development. I've seen young athletes learn to handle disappointment on the field and apply that resilience at school and at home. I've watched parents, grandparents, teachers, police officers, and coaches come together to support youth as they play and grow as young men. I've witnessed the power of consistent presence, mentorship, and community to change the trajectory of a young person's life.

But I've also seen our limitations. The reality is that our youth face challenges throughout the year and not just during the summer. Many times, they are one bad decision away from altering their lives forever. When school gets hard or the pull of negative influences feels overwhelming, youth need access to activities that keep them engaged, growing, and moving in a positive direction.

That's why I'm so excited to share this strategic vision with you.

Over the next three years, Southside Youth Development will transform from a summer-focused baseball program into a year-round youth development organization. We will expand our seasons beyond the summer months, launch after-school programming, formalize mentorship relationships, and deepen our investment in the young people who call Emma Wheeler Homes and Alton Park their home. And we will build the organizational capacity to sustain this growth for generations to come. This document represents our promise to the community we serve and our invitation to you to join us because transformation doesn't happen in isolation; it happens together.

## Will you join us?

With hope and determination,



Josh Harvey  
Executive Director,  
Southside Youth Development



# Our Mission, Vision & Values

## Our Mission

Equipping and empowering Chattanooga's youth while instilling life and leadership lessons through the game of baseball.

## Our Vision

- Transformed communities.
- Activated public spaces.
- Active, equipped, and empowered youth.

## Our Core Values

At Southside Youth Development, six core values guide everything we do, from how we run practice, to how we engage with families, to how we make organizational decisions.

### Faith Foundation

We operate from the belief that every child is created by God and deeply valued. Our Christian faith informs how we serve and compels us to encourage youth toward lives of integrity, responsibility, and purpose.

### Purposeful

Every activity, practice, and interaction serves a deliberate purpose in youth development. We operate with intentionality, ensuring that training in baseball skills and character development reinforce each other. Our coaches emphasize progress over perfection, and help youth understand that their choices, effort, and mindset help shape their future.

### Grit and Resilience

Baseball naturally teaches perseverance through failure, delayed gratification, and the discipline required to improve. We embrace challenging moments as opportunities for growth, and teach our youth to do likewise. Young people learn to push through difficulty, handle disappointment constructively, and develop mental toughness that translates far beyond the baseball field.

### No-Nonsense

We maintain high expectations for behavior, effort, and respect while operating with straightforward honesty. Coaches provide direct feedback and hold youth accountable to team standards. This approach creates a culture of mutual respect where young people understand that caring adults believe in their potential enough to demand excellence.

### Hard Lessons

We don't shy away from difficult topics in character development. We address responsibility, consequences, teamwork, respect for authority, and handling conflict in age-appropriate but meaningful ways. These hard lessons, delivered with care and consistency, prepare youth for life's inevitable challenges.

### Love of the Game

We cultivate a genuine love of baseball: the competition, camaraderie, and pure enjoyment of playing that keeps youth engaged and eager to return. When young people love what they're doing, they're open to coaching, correction, and growth. This passion creates the relational foundation for everything else we accomplish.

# The Challenge We're Addressing

## Empty Summers, Hidden Potential

Every day in Southside Chattanooga, particularly in the Emma Wheeler Homes and Alton Park community, young people face afternoons and summers without access to the programs and positive activities that keep youth engaged and growing. Without consistent mentorship and structured opportunities to develop character and life skills, youth often turn to negative influences and risky behaviors that derail their futures.

Children living in the Emma Wheeler Homes during the summer often experience long, unstructured days in one of Chattanooga's most geographically isolated public housing communities, physically removed from stores, recreational facilities, and the resources that other neighborhoods take for granted. These children lack reliable transportation to reach programs outside their neighborhood, effectively cutting them off from opportunities that could change their lives.

The stakes are higher than many realize as inner-city youth, particularly young men of color, face compounding risk factors that threaten their development:



### EXPOSURE TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE.

Youth in disadvantaged urban environments witness violence at significantly higher rates, which correlates with increased school failure, drug use, and early parenthood. Boys in these communities in particular are disproportionately affected.

### GEOGRAPHIC ISOLATION.

Remote neighborhoods like Emma Wheeler Homes lack access to organized recreational activities, safe parks, and positive extracurricular programming, the very resources that inner-city youth themselves identify as their most pressing community needs.

### ABSENCE OF STRUCTURED ACTIVITIES.

Research on protective factors shows that structured activities and supportive adult relationships are critical for healthy development. Without these, youth face dramatically elevated risks for delinquency, school dropout, and involvement in the juvenile justice system.

### LIMITED POSITIVE ROLE MODELS.

In Alton Park where **85% of families** are single-parent households and **40% of youth** live below the poverty line, youth often lack consistent access to caring adults who can guide them toward positive futures.

### THE "SUMMER SLIDE" OF LOST LEARNING.

When schools close for summer, youth without structured programming lose academic ground, social-emotional skills, and positive behavioral patterns making it harder to succeed when school resumes.

The consequences are sobering. By the time they reach adulthood, more than half of low-income, inner-city youth experience at least one "trajectory-altering event" like drug use, a criminal conviction, school failure, or teen parenthood that fundamentally changes the course of their lives.

Yet research also shows something remarkable: these same youth are hopeful for their futures in early childhood. At ages 8-10, more than 90% believe they will attend college, avoid drugs, and stay out of trouble.

**The difference between hope and reality comes down to consistent intervention, supportive relationships, and structured opportunities during the critical developmental years.**

**This is exactly where Southside Youth Development steps in.**

# Our Strategic Priorities for 2026–2029

Over the next three years, Southside Youth Development will pursue three interconnected priorities that will transform our organization and deepen our impact on the young people we serve.

## Priority One: Year-Round Impact

### Expanding and Deepening Our Presence When Youth Need Us Most

For the first few years of SYD, our impact has been limited by the calendar. While our ten-week summer program creates powerful relational momentum, that momentum dissipates during the nine months when youth return to school, face academic challenges, navigate family difficulties, and encounter the influences that threaten their futures.

Beginning in 2026, we will transform into a year-round operation that maintains consistent connection with participants throughout the entire year. This means:

#### Launching After-School Programming

In Fall 2026, we will launch a holistic after-school program that integrates tutoring, mentorship, baseball skills development, and character formation. This program will serve a focused cohort of young people, maintaining relational depth while providing consistent support during the school year.

#### Expanding Baseball Seasons

We will extend our baseball programming beyond summer, exploring spring and fall seasons that align with local recreational leagues. By partnering with the community year-round, we can continue to provide opportunities for athletics while also creating additional touchpoints for character development throughout the year.

#### Formalizing Mentorship

We will develop a structured one-on-one mentorship program that pairs trained adult mentors with individual youth in consistent, sustained relationships. These mentors will receive training in youth development and trauma-informed approaches, ensuring that every young person has at least one caring adult invested specifically in their growth and success.

#### Enhancing Our Leadership Training

We will expand our youth internship program, providing more opportunities for older participants to develop leadership skills, gain work experience, and receive financial literacy training. These young leaders will eventually transition into coaching and mentoring roles, creating a sustainable pipeline of adults who reflect the community's cultural background and understand its unique challenges.

#### Broadening Experiential Learning

We will expand experiences that open young people's eyes to possibilities beyond their immediate neighborhood with things like college tours, workplace visits, overnight camps, arts and technology partnerships, and outdoor adventures that build confidence and expand horizons.

PRIORITY ONE



# PRIORITY TWO

## Priority Two: Building for the Future

### Strengthening Our Organization to Sustain Long-Term Excellence

Meaningful expansion requires organizational infrastructure capable of sustaining it. Over the next three years, we will build the systems, governance structures, and operational capacity necessary to fulfill our expanded mission for generations to come.

#### Expanding Our Team

Our current single-staff model cannot support year-round programming. We will add team members who can manage day-to-day operations, coordinate volunteers, maintain family communication, and ensure program excellence, freeing our Executive Director to focus on strategic leadership, partnership development, and community engagement.

#### Strengthening Governance

We will enhance our board's effectiveness through committees that use board member's individual expertise, help recruit future members to fill in identified skills gaps, and implement governance practices that ensure strong oversight and accountability. Our board will deepen its engagement with our programs and sharpen its focus on strategic direction.

#### Implementing Professional Systems

We will invest in technology and systems that enable efficient operations at scale for managing donor relationships, coordinating volunteers, tracking participant progress, and measuring impact. These systems will support data-driven decision-making and transparent communication with stakeholders.

#### Diversifying Our Support Base

Long-term sustainability requires a broad base of support from individuals, foundations, corporations, and community partners. We will build the fundraising infrastructure necessary to cultivate diverse revenue streams, ensuring that our programs remain strong regardless of changes in any single funding source.



# PRIORITY THREE

## Priority Three: Coming Home

### Laying the Groundwork for a Permanent Physical Presence

While our current baseball field and partnership with The Howard School serve us well, we recognize that a dedicated indoor space could dramatically enhance our capacity to serve youth year-round. Indoor facilities for after-school programming, batting cages for year-round training, classroom space for tutoring, and community gathering areas could multiply our impact.

However, we also recognize that facilities represent significant commitments that must be grounded in operational reality rather than aspirational vision alone. Therefore, our approach to physical presence will be measured and strategic:

#### Proving the Model First

Before committing to permanent infrastructure, we will operate year-round programming in partnership spaces for several years. This approach allows us to test and refine our model for expansion, understand our true facility needs, and build the operational track record that justifies major investment.

#### Exploring Strategic Opportunities

We will actively explore facility options that align with community needs and organizational capacity. The Chattanooga Lookouts' planned stadium relocation to the Southside creates unprecedented partnership possibilities. Our strong relationship with Chattanooga Housing Authority opens potential for long-term arrangements around the Emma Wheeler Homes field. Other community facilities may also offer opportunities for shared use.

#### Building Financial Capacity

We will establish a dedicated facility reserve fund, separate from operating reserves, that builds financial capacity for future facility-related needs. This disciplined savings approach ensures that when the right opportunity emerges, we will be prepared to act.

#### Making a Data-Driven Decision

By the end of this strategic period, we will have accumulated several years of operational data from year-round programming. That data will inform a clear decision about whether owned facilities would significantly enhance our impact or whether enhanced partnership models serve our mission more effectively.



# The Southside Youth Development Approach

## What Makes Us Different

At Southside Youth Development, we believe baseball is more than a game. It's a training ground for life. Our coaches and mentors use baseball to give young people the chance to play, develop, and grow through practical instruction and guidance that helps them succeed, both on and off the field.

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### **We don't ask families to come to us. We go to them.**

For years, SYD has built trust and established deep roots in Emma Wheeler Homes and Alton Park by bringing a high-quality baseball program directly into the neighborhood, removing transportation barriers and creating a sense of pride and ownership among participants.

### **We're Embedded in the Community**

Unlike programs that require families to travel to distant facilities, we transformed an overgrown, unused field in the heart of Emma Wheeler Homes into one of the best youth baseball facilities in Southside Chattanooga. The field sits just feet from families' front doors, making participation accessible to every child in the neighborhood.

### **We Provide Year-Round Relationships**

Many of our coaches and mentors are teachers at the schools our youth attend. This means we're not just summer visitors. We're familiar faces who maintain connections with participants throughout the year, from elementary school through high school graduation.

### **We Focus on Holistic Development**

Through baseball, youth learn essential life skills: teamwork, perseverance, responsibility, gratitude, and grit. They practice showing up consistently, handling disappointment, supporting teammates, and working toward long-term goals all within the safe structure of a team sport.

### **We Create Community Gathering Spaces**

Our games are more than competitions. They're neighborhood events where parents, siblings, and community members come together to watch, support, and encourage youth as they play. The baseball field becomes a connection point that activates public space and builds relationships across the community.

### **We Keep Barriers Low**

We provide all equipment, maintain safe and quality fields, offer excellent coaching, and serve meals throughout the program all at little to no cost to families. We're committed to ensuring that every child who wants to participate can do so, regardless of family financial circumstances.

### **We Create Space for Kids to Be Kids**

In a neighborhood where safety concerns and food insecurity are real, our program provides a structured environment where youth can simply be children playing, learning, and growing without the weight of adult worries.

# Character at the Core

## Building Leaders Through Intentional Development

Character development is at the heart of everything we do at Southside Youth Development. We've implemented a formal character development curriculum integrated into every practice and game, ensuring that athletic skill development and character formation work together to shape whole persons.

Our approach is structured but personal. Ten-minute sessions at the end of each activity focus on one character trait over a two-week period. Recent themes have included:

**Gratitude** — Appreciating teammates, opportunities, and daily blessings; recognizing that practicing gratitude changes how we see the world

**Teamwork** — Understanding that success requires collective effort, trust, and a willingness to put shared goals ahead of personal gain.

**Focus** — Maintaining clear concentration on important goals; learning to distinguish between what truly matters and temporary distractions

**Respect** — We teach respect as a reflection of character: treating others with dignity, self-control, and empathy in victory and defeat, and extending honor to teammates, coaches, opponents, officials, and family members at all times.

**Effort** — Understanding that "hustle requires no talent;" a commitment to giving your best no matter what the circumstance.

# Our Story

Southside Youth Development's story began long before it became an organization. It started with one coach, one team, and one question: What if baseball could transform the life of a community and rebuild hope for its children?

In 2016, Coach Jon Johnson was leading the struggling baseball team at The Howard School in Chattanooga. Many of his players came from challenging environments, and with little parental support, he often drove them home after practices. Those evening drives opened his eyes. He saw neglected ballfields and empty lots, overgrown and forgotten. He also saw kids hanging out on corners with nowhere structured or positive to go.

That combination—a love for baseball and a heart burdened for kids—sparked a vision to bring baseball and mentorship back to the neighborhoods where kids live.

The idea took shape when a group of Howard students asked Coach Johnson to help rebuild their long-abandoned baseball field. For over a decade, the field had been unusable. But over the next thirteen months, students, volunteers, and community members worked side by side, clearing brush, laying dirt, and restoring hope one shovel at a time. The project didn't just produce a playable field. It produced character, ownership, and pride at The Howard School.

That transformation became the model for what would become Southside Youth Development. In 2018, SYD was formally founded to take the combination of mentorship, hard work, and guidance from the Howard program and replicate it in other neighborhoods.

In 2021, SYD made its first major investment in the Emma Wheeler Homes community, restoring an overgrown field in a project that once again brought volunteers, kids, and parents together. What began as a project to restore a baseball field became a community movement, proving that when people show up with love, consistency, and a shovel, transformation follows.

# By the Numbers: Demonstrating Our Impact

## What We've Accomplished

**150** young people connected with consistent, positive adult mentors since 2021

**10+** weeks of intensive summer programming, with 100+ contact hours between coaches and youth every year.

**30+** character development sessions delivered to each participant annually

**45** young athletes served annually through our summer program

**30+** games played each summer across all teams

**5+** years of building trust and deep roots in Emma Wheeler Homes and Alton Park

**1,000+**

meals provided annually, addressing immediate physical needs while creating consistent touchpoints with families

**3** competitive teams fielded each season (10U, 13U, and 16U age groups)

## Where We're Headed

70-75 youth to be served annually by 2029

Year-round programming launching in 2026, including after-school support

15-20 trained adult mentors paired with youth in formal one-on-one relationships

35-40 program weeks annually, transforming from summer-only to year-round presence

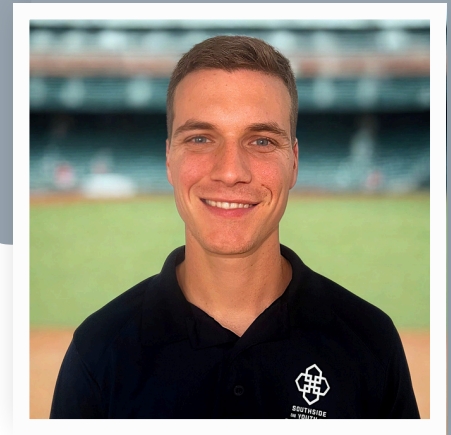
3-5 young leaders graduating from our program each year who stay involved by mentoring younger participants



# Our Leadership

## Executive Director: Josh Harvey

Josh Harvey serves as Executive Director of Southside Youth Development, bringing the organization's mission to life through hands-on leadership and deep community commitment. A graduate of Covenant College with a bachelor's degree in Community Development, Josh first connected with SYD as a volunteer during his senior year.



During his time at Covenant College, Josh was a catcher for the baseball team and became the first player in school history to earn CoSIDA Academic All-America first team honors. After graduating, he served as an assistant baseball coach at Covenant for two years, gaining valuable college-level coaching experience. Before joining SYD full-time, he interned with Heart for Winter Haven in Florida, researching affordable housing solutions while living in a transitional house for young homeless men. This experience deepened his understanding of the systemic barriers facing vulnerable populations and strengthened his commitment to community-based solutions.

Under Josh's leadership, SYD has grown significantly in both reach and quality. The summer program now serves more than 40 youth annually, program systems have been formalized and strengthened, and community relationships have deepened considerably. Josh has built a diverse volunteer coaching staff, developed a comprehensive character development curriculum, and established organizational infrastructure that positions SYD for sustainable growth.

Josh's leadership philosophy centers on consistent presence and authentic relationship. He serves as head coach for the youngest team, maintains the Emma Wheeler Homes field year-round, and invests deeply in knowing each participant personally. His approach reflects the conviction that meaningful transformation happens through sustained relationship rather than one-time interventions.



# Our Partners

## A Community United for Youth

Southside Youth Development's impact is multiplied through strategic partnerships with organizations that share our commitment to serving Chattanooga's youth.

**The Howard School:** Howard High School provides critical field and facility access and connects SYD with coaching talent from the school's teaching staff. Because many of our coaches teach at Howard, they maintain year-round relationships with SYD youth who will eventually attend the school. This partnership bridges elementary and secondary education, enabling mentors to support youth through critical transition years.

**Church Partners:** Multiple faith communities provide financial support, volunteer coaches, meal provision, and facility access. Churches connect SYD with mission-minded donors and volunteers who share our values-based approach to youth development.

**Chattanooga Lookouts:** Our partnership with Chattanooga's minor league baseball team provides exceptional access for our youth, including on-field experiences, professional player visits to SYD programs, stadium clinic opportunities, and annual SYD Night with free tickets and promotional exposure. This partnership connects our young people to professional sports role models and expands their sense of possibility. The team's planned stadium relocation to Southside creates exciting opportunities for future collaboration.

**Covenant College:** Every year, college baseball players serve as assistant coaches and mentors, providing positive role models who are pursuing higher education. This partnership exposes SYD youth to college students and reinforces that higher education is achievable.

**Chattanooga Housing Authority:** Our field access at Emma Wheeler Homes and strong relationship with the Housing Authority provides a critical venue for programming in our target community.

**Community Organizations:** Partnerships with the Chattanooga Police and Fire Departments, local businesses, and other nonprofits expand our reach and create additional opportunities for community bridge-building.



# Join Our Mission

We invite you to be part of this transformation. Lasting change happens together, and we believe sports have the power to change lives when a community unites to support and invest in its youth.

## Give Financially

Your investment supports program expansion, equipment, field maintenance, meals, and the staff capacity needed to serve more young people more deeply.

Every dollar goes directly toward transforming young lives.

## Volunteer as a Mentor or Coach

Build relationships with youth who need caring adults in their lives. Whether you can commit to a full season of coaching or periodic mentorship meetings, your consistent presence makes a difference.

## Bring a Meal

Demonstrate tangible care for participants and their families by providing meals during program activities. Breaking bread together builds community and addresses real physical needs.

## Spread the Word

Help us build awareness and support by sharing SYD's story in your networks. Every conversation plants seeds for future partnerships, volunteers, and donors.

## Why Your Investment Matters

Every investment in Southside Youth Development is an investment in young lives, strong families, and a thriving Chattanooga. Together, we can ensure that geography and economic circumstance don't determine a child's future, and that every young person in our city has access to the mentorship, opportunities, and support they need to reach their God-given potential.

We want to expand our impact beyond the summer months. We're committed to truly knowing our participants, providing comprehensive support, and demonstrating measurable impact. We're building something sustainable that will serve Emma Wheeler Homes and Alton Park for generations to come.

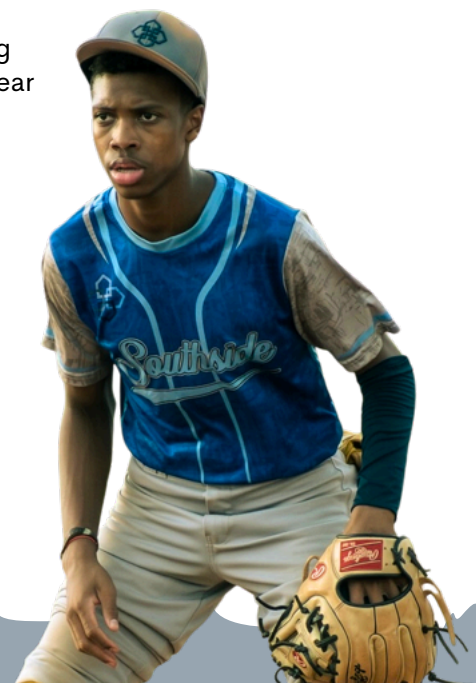
Over the next three to five years, we're focused on deepening relationships with youth who are at critical developmental stages. We want to create wraparound support that includes tutoring, intentional mentorship, goal-setting assistance, and help navigating challenges at home and school. Our goal is to develop young leaders each year who graduate from our program with strong character and a desire to stay involved in their community by mentoring younger participants, creating a virtuous cycle of community transformation.

### For more information, visit our website or contact:

Josh Harvey  
Executive Director  
Southside Youth Development

**Contact info** (919-939-0495), [Joshuaharvey2018@gmail.com](mailto:Joshuaharvey2018@gmail.com)

**Website:** [www.SYDchatt.org](http://www.SYDchatt.org)



# A Letter from Our Board Chair

Dear Friends and Partners,

As Board Chair of Southside Youth Development, I have the privilege of working alongside some of the most dedicated, passionate people I've ever known. People who believe deeply that every child in Southside Chattanooga deserves the opportunity to thrive.

When I first became involved with SYD, I was immediately struck by the organization's distinctive approach. This isn't a program that parachutes in from outside the community, delivers services, and disappears. SYD is embedded in Emma Wheeler Homes and Alton Park. Our Executive Director maintains the field year-round. Our coaches are teachers at Howard High School who see these young people in hallways and classrooms throughout the school year. Our games have become community celebrations where neighbors gather to cheer on their children.

That embeddedness creates something powerful: trust. And trust is the foundation upon which everything else is built.

Over the past several years, I've watched SYD grow from a promising startup into a mature organization with exceptional financial health, proven program impact, and deep community relationships. Under Josh Harvey's leadership, we've formalized our character development curriculum, expanded our partnerships, and built the infrastructure necessary for sustainable growth.

Now, we're ready to take the next step.

The strategic vision outlined in this document represents our board's confident commitment to SYD's future. We believe in this organization's mission, we believe in its leadership, and we believe in the transformational power of consistent mentorship and structured opportunity in the lives of young people.

Our board brings diverse expertise in education, finance, community development, business, and athletics united by shared passion for serving Chattanooga's youth. We take our governance responsibilities seriously: ensuring strong financial stewardship, providing strategic oversight, and supporting our Executive Director as he leads this organization into its next chapter.

But we also know that SYD's success depends on more than board governance. It depends on a community that believes in these young people as much as we do.

I want to thank our donors, volunteers, partner organizations, and the families who trust us with their children. Your investment of time, resources, and belief makes everything possible.

Most of all, I want to thank the young people of Emma Wheeler Homes and Alton Park. You inspire us every day with your resilience, your growth, and your potential. This strategic vision exists **because of you and for you**.

Together, we're building something that will last: transformed communities where public spaces are activated, where youth are equipped and empowered, and where hope is instilled in the next generation. I invite you to join us on this journey.

With gratitude and confidence,

**Xavier Cotto**



*Board Chair, Southside Youth Development*



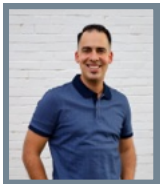
# About Southside Youth Development

Southside Youth Development is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2021 with a mission to equip and empower Chattanooga's youth while instilling life and leadership lessons through the game of baseball. We serve youth ages 8-16 in the Emma Wheeler Homes and Alton Park communities of Southside Chattanooga.

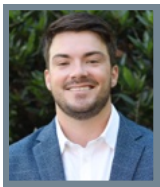
Our vision is to see transformed communities, activated public spaces, and youth who are active, equipped, and empowered to become the best students, future parents, friends, and community members they can be.

## Our Board of Directors

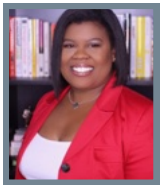
Southside Youth Development is governed by a dedicated Board of Directors whose members bring diverse professional expertise and deep commitment to our mission.



**Xavier Cotto, Board Chair** Electrical engineer and program manager at Tennessee Valley Authority with thirteen years of experience leveraging skills and resources to foster inclusive environments and create opportunities for the next generation. Xavier is deeply connected in the Chattanooga community and provides strategic leadership for the organization.



**Riley Harmon, Treasurer** U.S. Army veteran with six years of service including multiple overseas deployments. Riley recently completed his accounting degree at UTC and works at HHM, a local accounting firm. His financial expertise and military discipline ensure strong stewardship of organizational resources.



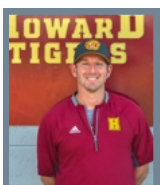
**Dr. Lakesha Carson, Secretary** Accomplished educator with twenty-seven years in public education, including leadership roles as a school principal. A former student-athlete who earned full scholarships for softball and basketball at UTC, Dr. Carson currently leads the development of Opportunity High, a program offering non-traditional pathways for students. Her deep understanding of education systems and athletic background provide critical insights for SYD's programming.



**Alan Carmichael, Board Member** Chattanooga native, accountant, and former professional baseball player with the New York Mets organization. A member of the Greater Chattanooga Sports Hall of Fame, Alan is passionate about using his network to unlock opportunities and partnerships that empower youth.



**Michael Hayes, Board Member** Nuclear engineer, podcast host, and community leader. Michael is founder of the Different Thought Podcast and co-founder of the Rucker at Avondale, an annual basketball tournament celebrating sports, hip-hop, and community. A proud Chattanooga native, he is passionate about mentoring youth to reach their full potential.



**Jon Johnson, Board Member** Dean of Students and Head Baseball Coach at The Howard School with sixteen years of experience in education. Jon is working towards a PhD in higher education and specializes in adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), serving as lead trainer for SYD's trauma-informed coaching approach. His vision for bringing baseball and mentorship back to underserved neighborhoods sparked the founding of SYD.

