



1991  **SPORTS**<sup>®</sup> 2016  
**BACKERS**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016**





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# dear friends,



I recently had the opportunity to chat with some of Sports Backers' founders during our 25th anniversary Board of Directors reunion. In talking with them, I got a feeling that they're not surprised by the impact our organization has had. You can see a twinkle in their eyes—they had grand plans for Sports Backers from the very beginning. Even now we can see that Bobby Ukrop, JR Hippie, Bob Keiter, and Bill Flowers' collective vision for creating real community change through sporting events was powerful—it remains our core, guiding principle to this day.

After raising \$55,000 in startup funds from 110 founding members in 1991, Sports Backers began its journey. Jon Lugbill was hired as the organization's first executive director in 1993, and, under his leadership, we began bidding on events to drive sports tourism. Despite hosting several great events in Richmond, we faced financial challenges and aging venues. The Board of Directors responded and, under Buddy Allen's strong advice and with the philanthropic support of local companies and community leaders, switched focus to developing and creating locally-owned sports tourism events, including the

Anthem Richmond Marathon and Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k.

In 2012, when I joined the board, our focus evolved again. We all knew our biggest impact was not in filling hotel rooms but rather in motivating our friends and neighbors to be more active. We changed our mission to reflect just that and to continue to honor Sports Backers' original vision. Once again, with strong leadership from our board, Roy Grier at the helm and Burke King leading a fundraising campaign, we were able to leverage our brand and connections in order to build a comprehensive physical activity movement. New initiatives were added advocating for safe and accessible places to ride and walk. We focused on providing fitness opportunities to underserved communities. We continued to build on our already successful kids running programs and student-athlete scholarship program. We surged towards our new goals. Of course, we haven't been alone. Ultimately, a network of hundreds of area companies, schools, non-profits, local governments, and faith-based organizations have joined in our vision to improve the health and vitality of our region.

As I drove home from the reunion reflecting back on our history, it became clear to me that our vision has expanded beyond the 110 founding members to include hundreds of thousands of dedicated and innovative volunteers, participants, donors, sponsors, and other supporters.

In the following pages, we hope you'll enjoy a glimpse into our vision and enjoy highlights from both our past and present. Just remember that, as you read, we welcome you to be part of the story. Whether you run your first race or volunteer to get our youth moving, we hope you'll join us as we embark on the next 25 years of inspiring every member of our community to live actively.

Sincerely,

Tyler Hutchens  
Board Chair

## board of directors

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### Bill Hughes

Ukrop's Monument Avenue 10k participant, Bill Hughes, finished the race in a record longest time of 50 days and 7 hours. He suffered a heart attack at the half way point of the course on April 9, 2016. Other participants, spectators, and first responders rushed to his aid and saved his life. After an amazing recovery he picked up where he had left off and crossed the finish line on May 29.

# 2016 at a glance



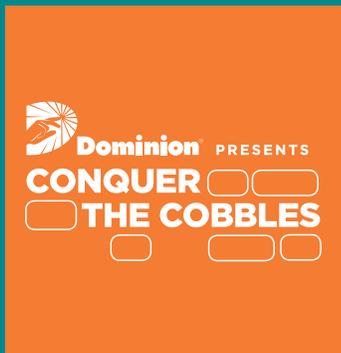
### Volunteers of the Year

Volunteers are crucial in making our events and programs possible, and each year we have the honor of recognizing some exceptional individuals who contribute so much to furthering our mission. Congratulations to all our Volunteers of the Year: Pat Dorch and Joy Jackson (Events); Lynn Anderson (Training Team Coach); Jeanne Minnix (Bike Walk RVA); Kristen Callen (Kids Run RVA); Taimani Scott (Keep It Moving)



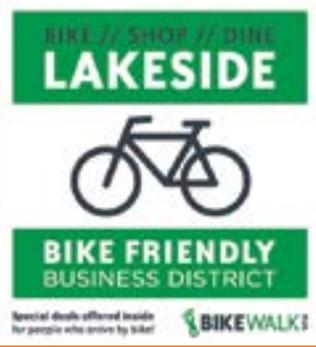
### Richmond Cycling Corps takes on Conquer the Cobbles

While Richmond celebrated being the host city for elite cyclists from all over the world during the UCI Road World Championships in September, a group of amateur riders enjoyed some accomplishments of their own. On September 25, eleven riders with Richmond Cycling Corps took on Conquer the Cobbles presented by Dominion—a Sports Backers event that allowed the public to try out a championship course. (RCC works with youth who currently live or have lived in East End public housing.)



### Trails & Ales Debut

Nothing inspires us quite like our own city, which is why we created the inaugural Trails & Ales, a trail run/craft beer festival that took place on October 3, 2015. The community jumped at the chance to celebrate two of their favorite RVA attributes, and the event sold out within ten days of registration opening.



## First Permanent Bike Friendly Business District Established

The Lakeside Business Association partnered with Bike Walk RVA to bring the region's first permanent Bike Friendly Business District to the Lakeside neighborhood in Henrico. Twenty-one businesses along Lakeside Avenue are participating in "Bike Friendly Saturdays" by offering discounts, free merchandise, and other promotions for anyone who arrives by bike on a Saturday.

The world rode in Richmond and we got to be a part of it!



## Floyd Bike Boulevard Ribbon Cutting

On May 20, National Bike to Work Day, there was an official ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly-completed Floyd Avenue Bike/Walk Street. Enhancements were made to Floyd Avenue to create a safe, efficient bicycle and pedestrian route with low traffic speeds and volume.



## Partners in Trail Running

We partnered with Ragnar Trail Relays to bring Ragnar Trail Richmond to Pocahontas State Park in April. Teams of runners conquered 125 miles of trails—without stopping! We're talking nighttime trail running! The event attracted more than 250 teams.



## Active RVA Summit

In partnership with VCU Health, we held our inaugural Active RVA Summit on March 7. The event featured programs and sessions geared towards engineering physical activity into schools, workplaces, and communities with industry experts sharing information and best practices on creating active lifestyle opportunities. We also recognized schools, organizations, and workplaces that earned their Active RVA certification.

## Golden Hammer Award

Bike Walk RVA was honored by Better Housing Coalition at their annual Golden Hammer Awards. We received a Groundbreaker Award in the transportation equity category for our leadership in addressing the need for more and improved bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.



## We're Celebrating 25 Years at Sports Backers

We've loved looking back on the hundreds of miles run and cycled, the hours of support volunteers have given, the many finish lines participants have crossed, and the thousands of people who have made Sports Backers possible. We are moving our way to better health and a better quality of life. Just imagine where we could be in 25 more years!

## Sports Commission of the Year

This year, we became the first four-time winner of the National Association of Sports Commissions Member of the Year Award, having also won in 2006, 2009, and 2011. The award recognizes the NASC member that has had the most outstanding impact on its local community through sporting events, community events, and economic impact.





# scholar-athletes past, present, and future

**“We are all on a lifelong adventurous pursuit to find the gifts that have been hidden inside of ourselves and the life that we live.”**

**Courtney Page Ferrell**

25th Anniversary Scholar-Athlete Program  
June 6, 2016

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A stand-out track star at St. Catherine’s in the early 1990s and among the first scholar-athlete awardees, Courtney Page Ferrell came full circle to speak at a dinner in June celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Times-Dispatch/Sports Backers Scholar-Athlete Awards Program. Courtney, an internationally known creativity consultant (also called out by Oprah as an inspired change

agent), encouraged an audience of current scholar-athlete award recipients, their families, coaches, and guests to seek out their life gifts related to confidence, creative spirit, and community. She vividly remembered world-renowned tennis player Arthur Ashe speaking when he was the keynote at the first scholar-athlete awards dinner. He eloquently reflected on the Richmond community and the support it lent him on his ascent to become the first African American to win three Grand Slam titles.

Sitting in the room listening to Courtney speak was 18-year old Shanthi Hiremath, the 2016 girls' runner up, who attended Maggie Walker and now competes for Dartmouth. Shanthi received the Virginia High School League’s (VHSL) Achievement Award for 2A Female Athlete of the Year. She holds an impressive 16 school records and won five individual event state titles in indoor track earlier this year making her the first athlete—male or female—to

achieve this in a single VHSL state meet. Shanthi echoed Courtney’s sentiments about the power of community and said she could not be where she is without an incredible support network at Maggie Walker. “We were really like a family, and it was essential to have that support group for me all four years.”

Another among the first group of scholar-athletes recognized by the Times-Dispatch and Sports Backers in 1992 was Brandon Pollard, who went on to have an amazing career in soccer. After graduating from Henrico County’s J.R. Tucker as an all-state and Parade All-America soccer player, Brandon played for the University of Virginia, where he was a member of three NCAA national title teams. He then went on to play professionally for the Dallas Burn from 1996-2000 and was a member of the U.S. Olympic team in 1996. Today, Brandon lives in Dallas, Texas and along with his wife, co-founded the Texas Honeybee Guild to educate and advocate on the importance of pollination.



Left: Bobby Ukrop announces scholarship endowment to room of past and present scholar-athletes; Above: Courtney Page Ferrell addresses 2016 scholar athletes at the 25th Anniversary Scholar-Athlete Program; Right: Founding members of the Scholar-Athlete Program reunited at the inaugural reunion, including Mike Berry, J.R. Hipple, Jon Lugbill, Bobby Ukrop, and Allan Strange

While many scholar-athletes over the years have gone on to become professional athletes in football, golf, soccer, and other sports, a vast majority have gone on to pursue successful careers as teachers, coaches, entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors, and artists. We caught up with many of them (including Brandon) at a Scholar-Athlete reunion during Dominion Riverrock in May, which included scholar-athletes, Times-Dispatch and Sports Backers staff, as well as the individuals who started the Scholar-Athlete Program 25 years ago.

Among the founding members of the Scholar-Athlete Program in attendance at the inaugural reunion were Mike Berry, J.R. Hipple, Allan Strange, and Bobby Ukrop. The former Times-Dispatch Sports Editor Howard Owen was also recognized for encouraging the newspaper and the non-profit sports commission to join forces in creating the region's signature scholarship program. Since its inception, \$968,000 in college scholarships have been given to 494 deserving students thanks to the private philanthropy that makes the program possible.



## Preserve scholarships for the next twenty-five years and beyond.

Bobby Ukrop announced a special gift at the spring reunion. Bobby and Jayne Ukrop will match donations by scholar-athletes and their families up to \$25,000 in order to establish the first endowed scholarship for the region's talented athletes who excel at both academics and sports. As someone who is a true servant leader, Bobby challenges past and present recipients to pay it forward with a gift of their own. As Courtney Ferrell reminded guests at the June 6 dinner, "This is your community – it is for them to love you, but also for you to love them."

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**This is your community – it is for them to love you, but also for you to love them.**

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To support the Ukrop's Scholar-Athlete Endowment Challenge, please contact Cindy DiCello at (804) 285-9495, ext. 245 or [cindy@sportsbackers.org](mailto:cindy@sportsbackers.org). Checks made out to Sports Backers can also be sent to 100 Avenue of Champions, Richmond, VA 23230 with a note in the memo referencing the endowment challenge.

# with us from the start

We caught up with long-time Sports Backers event participants, committee members, and volunteers to find out just what it is that has kept them coming back to the Anthem Richmond Marathon year after year.



**Michael George**  
Longtime Volunteer & Committee Member

“Sports Backers has been a great asset to Richmond, and it’s a fulfilling experience [to be part of the Marathon]. I enjoy being around runners and the participants, standing at the finish line and watching people that have never done a marathon or half marathon before...seeing them finish and accomplish that and seeing the tears and the joy of going through this and actually finishing it, it’s the greatest thing.

For some people it’s a life changing event – they realize if they can do a marathon, they can do lots of other things. It’s great to see people go through that.

It’s great to see other people enjoy something that I enjoy, and do something they didn’t think they could do. They don’t have to look like a traditional runner in order to be a runner.

The growth of the marathon has led to more community participation in the event – parties and celebrations that have grown up around it on the course, and helped introduce people to the race from a spectator point of view which draws more people into it. Richmond does love a party, and that’s also part of the marathon experience.”



**Cecil Astrop**  
Participant and Female Winner in 1989 and 1991

“This will be my 58th marathon coming up. I don’t know how many Richmond races I’ve done, I’m guessing about

20, at least. We did New York, we did Boston, I ran Redwood, Avenue of the Giants. Richmond is by far the best one. I think that it's the perfect size. As a runner you're running with crowds, but they're not overwhelming...And the spectators on the Richmond course are really good. You have spectators the whole way, they're very knowledgeable about the event, the bands are a nice touch, you're never lost for water.

It's my favorite course, even though the course has changed a number of times since I won it in 1989 and 1991. When I train for Richmond, I train on the course. But I grew up here. And I guess just because it's my hometown and the organization. As long as I'm healthy, I will run Richmond every year.”



### Mike Levins

Participant, Committee Member, & Frequent Volunteer

“I think the MTT and now the Half and 8k training teams have had an enormous impact. People who never thought they could complete such an endeavor see others who look like them doing so. This is a powerful motivator. They see the possibility of moving from the 8k to the Monument Avenue 10k to the Half and to the Marathon.

I've volunteered with the race since the Sports Backers and Richmond Road Runners Club teamed up to keep the Marathon alive after the Richmond Newspapers decided to end their sponsorship...I really enjoy working the Help Desk at the Expo and the Starting Line on race day. For the future, I hope the event continues to grow while maintaining a great experience for its participants.

I'm going to finish with one of my favorite Marathon stories. It doesn't involve me but it's a favorite just the same. John Loughran's family came to register on the day before the race. John's daughter, Katherine, planned to run the 5 Miler. However, after leaving the expo, but still only a couple of blocks away, she realized she had actually signed up for the Marathon. Instead of going back and correcting her error, she decided to run the Marathon. And so she did. John was never prouder.”



### John and Kern Loughran

Husband and Wife Duo,  
Have Run Richmond Every Year Since 1978

“Running was a big part of our family, especially in the 80's, 90's, and first decade of this century. Kern always ran one of the three races, I always did the marathon, and we made a big party of the whole weekend. I have great memories, even when I did not live up to my expectations.

The marathon, and now the Monument Avenue 10k, has made the Richmond community more aware of physical fitness and the social aspect of running and walking solo or with friends. There are so many running events now, but those two races get the lion's share of attention. The marathon has been great for Richmond, adding yet another reason why this is a destination city.”



### John Deeter

Has Run Richmond Every Year Since 1978

“I'm afraid to quit –it's a fall event I look forward to and it's just a fun time! The crowd support is really good. I've done marathons in Boston, New York, and Pittsburgh...as far as the feeling of people being out there to cheer you on, Richmond is as good as any marathon.

It's become more of a race for everyone...people are definitely more active. It has brought a lot more people into running, and drawn in more people to Richmond from other parts of the country to participate.”



# our network

## Kids Run RVA

Kids Run RVA is giving kids across the region the chance to have fun while being physically active on a regular basis. **We support 60 school-based run clubs and events.**

## Active RVA

In 2016, **Active RVA celebrated 68 Companies and 99 Schools across the region for being Active RVA Certified** and for integrating physical activity as part of their culture.

## Keep It Moving

**Keep It Moving expanded its reach over the past year to now include 18 locations.** Many of these locations are the home to free fitness classes led by our Fitness Warriors.

## Bike Walk RVA

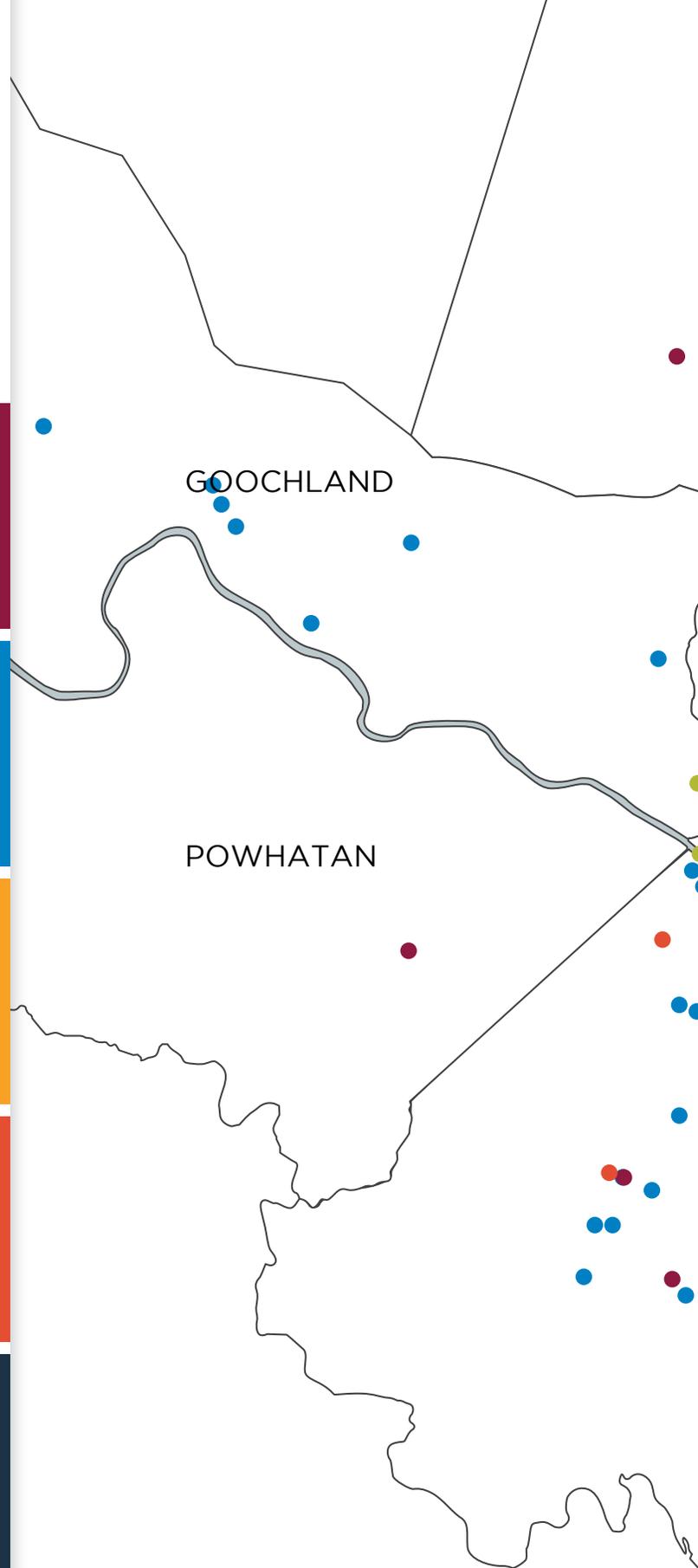
Effective advocacy for better biking and walking infrastructure is a team effort. Bike Walk RVA engages with 37 different nonprofit organizations, community-based groups, and government agencies on an ongoing basis to create comfortable and connected places to bike and walk in the region.

## Leadership

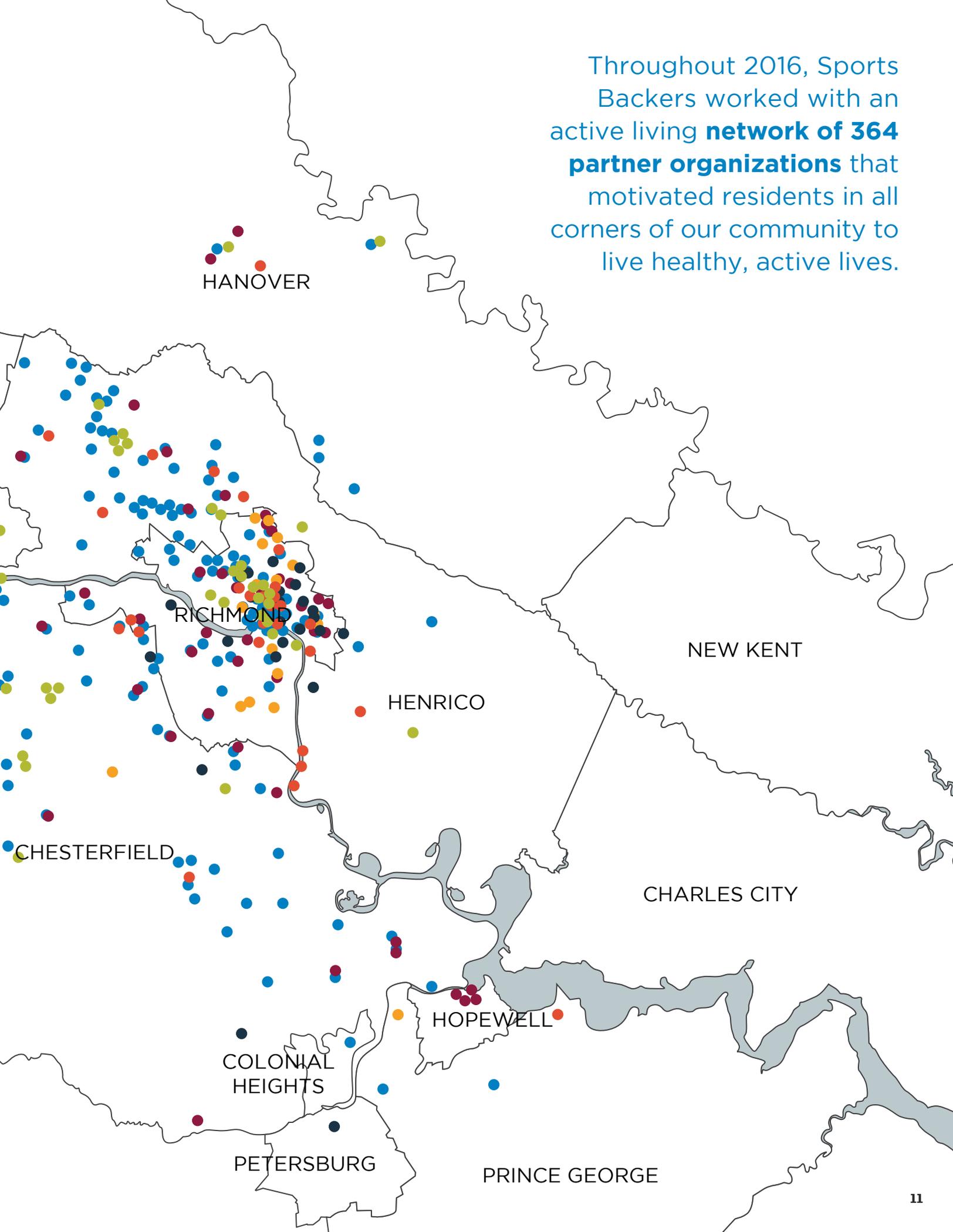
We have **staff members serving on a total of 18 Boards** across the region. We also provided facilitation and strategic planning **support to 10 area companies/non-profits.**

## Events

**We own and operate 13 events** throughout the year. We also **provide support to 30 other sporting events** held throughout the region.



Throughout 2016, Sports Backers worked with an active living **network of 364 partner organizations** that motivated residents in all corners of our community to live healthy, active lives.



# 25 years of motivating a



## Sports Tourism Growth 1991-2016

Since its inception, Sports Backers has led the way in expanding sports tourism across the region, and the local economy has benefited substantially. From attracted events like the 1995-1998 NCAA Men's Soccer National Championships to locally-owned events such as the Jefferson Cup soccer tournament, RVA has become a major destination for athletes and sports competitions across the country.



## Scholarships 1992-2016

In 1992, Arthur Ashe was featured as the keynote speaker during our inaugural scholar-athlete awards ceremony. Since the program's inception, we have awarded over \$968,000 in scholarships to 494 outstanding high school student-athlete seniors in recognition of their hard work both on the field and in the classroom.

1991



## Donor Support 1991-2016

In 1991, 110 founding members raised \$55,000 in startup funds to launch Sports Backers. These funds enabled the organization to instantly implement a long-term, aggressive strategy for impacting the community. As the years progressed, donors have remained a core part of our success. Our work today is powered by thousands of donors and hundreds of sponsors who support our programs and events annually.

## Active Living Network 1991-2016

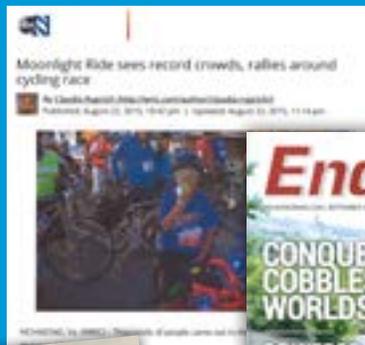
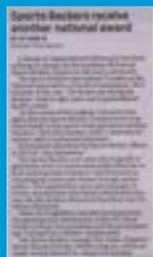
We have never been alone in our vision to improve the health and vitality of our region. From the beginning, a network of hundreds of area companies, schools, non-profits, local governments, and faith-based organizations have joined us to help further our mission. Today, our network includes more than 364 entities.



## Marathon 1998-2016

The Richmond Marathon became our first owned event in 1998, which marked a shift from bidding on events to producing our own. The result of this transformation has been the tremendous expansion of sports tourism across the region, including the marathon itself, which has grown from 2,600 participants to 21,000.

## in the news



# more active community

## Accolades Won 2006-2015

Transforming greater Richmond into a thriving sports tourism destination that celebrates a vibrant, active lifestyle has earned Sports Backers national recognition. Voted on by our peers, we've earned the title of Best Sports Commission in the country an unprecedented four times, including in 2006, 2009, 2011, and 2015.



## Advocacy 2012-2016

In an effort to change the way people move around their communities, we began to focus on advocating for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure by pushing for local, state, and federal support. Since 2012, we've seen the addition of 44 miles of bike lanes, bike boulevards, and paved shared use paths throughout our region.



## 2016

RVA is one of the 20 most active regions in the country!\*

\*According to the 2016 ACSM AMERICAN FITNESS INDEX™

## 2016

## Outside BEST TOWN EVER 2012



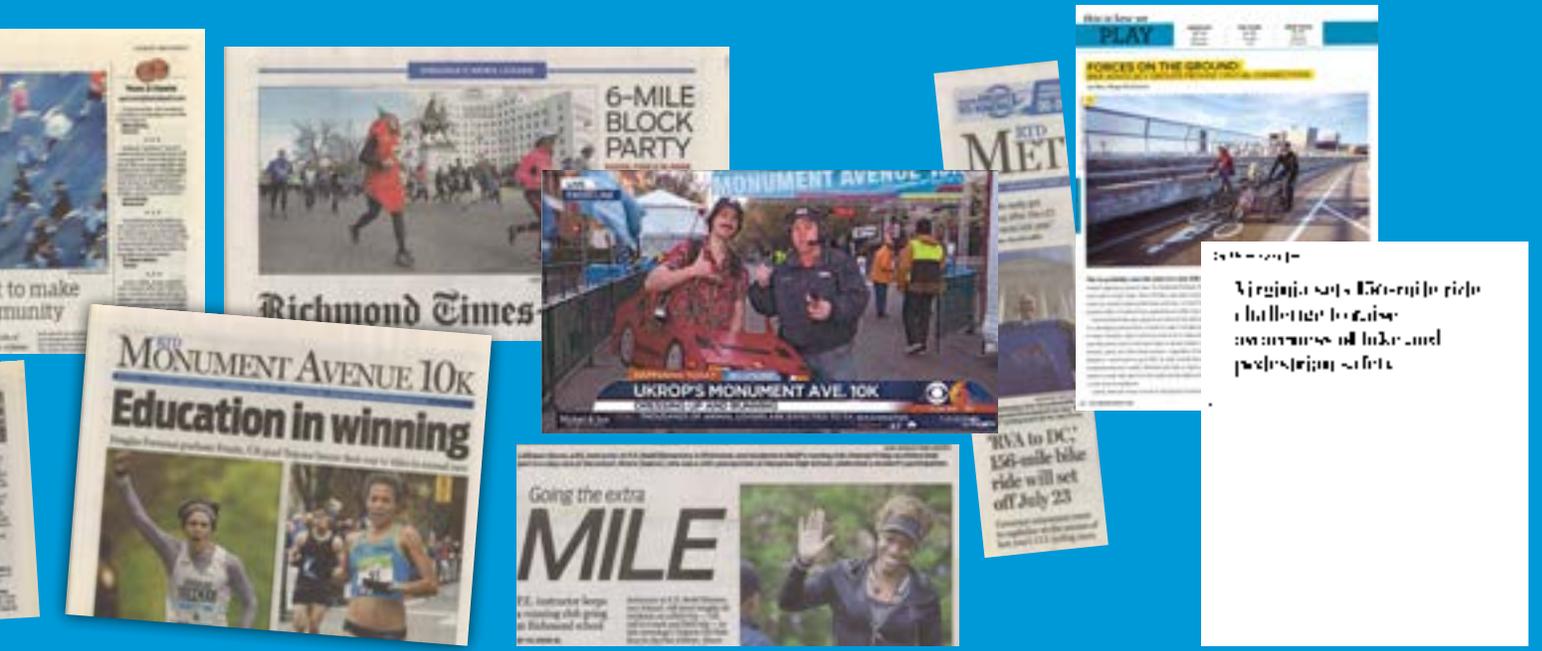
## 2009-2016

Our first Dominion Riverrock festival in 2009 helped elevate and celebrate our region's vibrant outdoor culture. The event's evolution into a nationally-recognized festival and its showcase of our trail, mountain biking, and kayaking communities contributed to Richmond being named the nation's best outdoor river town by Outside Magazine in 2012.



## Equity 2012-2016

Because we believe that residents from all corners of our community should be able to lead healthy lifestyles, our focus evolved to include working to intentionally increase access to opportunities for physical activity in underserved populations. From offering income-based event entries to training community leaders to lead free fitness classes, our focus in this area continues to grow.



# honor roll of donors

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Anthem BlueCross BlueShield  
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Diamond Springs  
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SunTrust



MARTIN'S Food Markets  
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 Richmond Times-Dispatch



Call Federal Credit Union



Anthem BlueCross BlueShield  
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 Morton's Steakhouse  
 Uber  
 NBC12  
 Richmond Times-Dispatch



CarMax  
 Chesterfield Chamber of Commerce  
 Sierra Nevada Brewing Company  
 Chesterfield County  
 Mid-Iothian Mines and Railroads Foundation



VCU Health  
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