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CONTACT: Ravyn Foltz, Marketing Campaigns & Strategy Manager |
communications@sparkwheel.org

SPARKWHEEL SELECTED AS INAUGURAL GRANTEE OF FIFA GLOBAL CITIZEN EDUCATION FUND AHEAD OF 2026 WORLD CUP

Kansas and Missouri nonprofit supported with funding as Kansas City prepares to host World Cup matches

LAWRENCE — SparkWheel, a nonprofit serving more than 30,000 students across Kansas and Missouri, has been selected as one of 27 organizations worldwide to receive funding from the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund, a new initiative aimed at expanding access to education and sport ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The organization was awarded \$250,000 to support student services that help young people succeed in school and in life.

The FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund is a global initiative focused on expanding access to quality education and sport for children in more than 200 communities, with a goal of mobilizing \$100 million by the 2026 FIFA World Cup. SparkWheel is among the first cohort of grantees, representing organizations across 10 countries.

The announcement comes as Kansas City prepares to host matches during the 2026 World Cup, bringing increased international attention to the region.

“This investment comes at a pivotal moment for our region,” said Malissa Martin, President and CEO of SparkWheel. “As Kansas City prepares to welcome the world, we have an opportunity to ensure that young people here, especially those facing the greatest barriers, are not left on the sidelines. This funding helps us meet students where they are, connect them to the support they need to succeed, and ensure they can fully participate in their future.”

Serving more than 60 schools across Kansas and Missouri, SparkWheel helps students overcome barriers to learning through school-based support services. The organization places Student Support Coordinators inside schools where they help address barriers to learning such as food insecurity, mental health needs, transportation barriers, and academic support. In SparkWheel-supported schools, 96% of seniors graduate, while many students improve attendance, behavior and academic performance.

The funding will support our services in communities where students face persistent barriers to success.



The announcement also coincides with the launch of “Footwork for Futures,” a global campaign encouraging individuals to share soccer-related videos on social media to raise awareness and funding for education initiatives worldwide.

SparkWheel leaders say the combination of global momentum and local investment presents an opportunity to connect the visibility of the World Cup to long-term outcomes for students in the region.

About SparkWheel: SparkWheel is a nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers, filling unmet needs and helping students and families thrive. The organization serves more than 30,000 students in early childhood, K-12 and post-secondary settings in over 60 schools across Kansas and Missouri. For more information, visit www.sparkwheel.org.

About the FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund: The FIFA Global Citizen Education Fund is a global initiative designed to expand access to quality education and football for children worldwide. Launched by FIFA and Global Citizen, the fund aims to mobilize \$100 million by the 2026 FIFA World Cup Final to support community-based organizations advancing educational access.