Paris 2024 Athletes for Good
Recipient Stories

Alena Olsen, Rugby
United States

- **Charity:** EcoAthletes
- **Story:** Alena Olsen wanted to make a positive environmental impact and believes one of the only real solutions to climate change is empowering and inviting communities and fan bases to act on climate initiatives. That’s why she joined EcoAthletes, an organization dedicated to inspiring and coaching athletes to lead the fight against climate change by providing them with the tools to educate other athletes to be “Climate Leaders”. Since joining EcoAthletes, Alena has spoken on panels, sold green sponsorships, led programs that reduced waste and sequester carbon and promoted the organization on her social media platforms. Additionally, in 2021, Alena spearheaded the “Going for Green” campaign with the USA Rugby Women’s 7s team, where they partnered with an app that translated their daily workouts into the planting of trees. They invited multiple teams and fans to join along, resulting in 5,000 trees being planted in Sub-Saharan Africa, which provided jobs to local workers.
- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow EcoAthletes to accelerate its #ClimateComeback via three new Champions-led initiatives.

Alexis Hanquinquant, Para triathlon
France

- **Charity:** Marion La Main Tendue
- **Story:** As a father, Alexis Hanquinquant is a passionate advocate against bullying and believes that every child has the right to a violent-free education. He recently started volunteering at Marion La Main Tendue (Marion’s House), which prevents and combats violence and harassment in schools as well as cyber violence. The organization participates in public conferences to raise awareness and prevent the risk associated with school violence, bullying at school and cyberbullying. It also offers workshops for children and their parents to learn how to protect themselves against violence and provides support to families and victims confronted with bullying. As a volunteer, Alexis participates in PR events to help promote visibility for the organization and is looking forward to continuing his promotional efforts during Anti-Bullying Week starting November 13.
- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Marion’s House to extend more than 200 hours of essential psychological support to approximately 25 victims of bullying and their families, further strengthening their efforts to create a safer and more compassionate environment for young people.

Amber Keegan, Swimming
Great Britain

- **Charity:** Athlete Interactions
- **Story:** During her athletic career, Amber Keegan personally experienced and witnessed issues like bullying, abuse and body negativity, as well as training methods that harmed her both physically and mentally. With the desire to change the way athletes view themselves as humans
above and beyond their sporting performances, Amber founded Athlete Interactions, an organization that decreases stigma and increases action around mental health for women and girls in sports. The organization’s long-term goal is to partner with the International Olympic Committee to engage athletes within the Movement to spread awareness and empower more young people to become the future leaders of our society. With the organization, Amber has impacted more than 400 women and girls through mentorship, coaching and education in the UK, as well as created a safe and open space for athletes to discuss their concerns.

- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** With the grant, Athlete Interactions will pay part-time staff and volunteers, run a pilot symposium on mental health and develop mentors.

**Andre De Grasse, Athletics**
Canada

- **Charity:** The Andre De Grasse Family Foundation
- **Story:** Andre De Grasse was raised by a single mother and money was tight for his family growing up. He benefitted from the generosity of others in his community who helped with the financial burden of competing in athletics at a high level. Andre wanted to pay it forward and started his own foundation, which is committed to inspiring and empowering youth through access to sports, education and healthcare. His foundation partners with other charities on various community initiatives. For example, they worked with Toronto Community Housing and hosted a Thanksgiving Day Lunch for hundreds of families. The foundation also launched the Andre De Grasse Future Championships Scholarship program with the goal of removing financial barriers for young people to advance in athletics while providing a pathway for a collegiate scholarship they otherwise might not earn. They currently have 16 student-athletes enrolled in the program.
- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow the Andre De Grasse Family Foundation to award six Future Championships scholarships or create a fundraising event with the Canadian Olympic Foundation and Kids Help Phone.

**Ayden Owens-Delerme, Athletics**
Puerto Rico

- **Charity:** Boys and Girls Club of Puerto Rico (Vieques)
- **Story:** Growing up with multiple siblings, family and community was at the heart of Ayden’s upbringing. When he was 10 years old, an earthquake damaged much of Haiti and many orphan children were brought to the U.S., where he and his family lived, seeking asylum. Ayden’s mother volunteered at an orphanage in Pittsburgh and brought Ayden and his siblings along. Ayden interacted with the children at the orphanage, teaching them English, playing games and reading with them. It was there his passion for volunteering was born. Ayden started volunteering with The Boys and Girls Club of Puerto Rico (Vieques), whose mission is to offer young people hope for a better future and opportunities for them to develop their full potential. They provide a safe place where children learn skills to become leaders who achieve their academic, personal and professional goals. The organization has fed more than 50,000 people through their food programs and impacted more than 5,000 children and adults through their workshops, distribution of materials and mentorship. Ayden has educated and taught the youth about track and field and the positive impact it can have on their lives.
• **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow the organization to rebuild play structures damaged by past hurricanes.

**Benjamin Blankenship, Athletics**

United States

• **Charity:** Endless Mileage Project
• **Story:** The more Benjamin Blankenship thought about his carbon footprint in relation to his travel, the more he felt the need to personally commit to acts of environmental sustainability. As such, he founded the Endless Mileage Project, an organization dedicated to fostering sustainable environments and programming that inspires the next generation of track and field athletes to break barriers. The organization has two distinct pillars: Fast Forest and Recovered Running. Fast Forest honors the accomplishments of athletes by planting a tree at a public park in Oregon every time an American miler breaks a 4:00 mile (men) and a 4:30 mile (women). The park currently consists of 755 trees. Recovered Running aims to reduce the barriers to entry into sports while simultaneously reducing the amount of sports gear that ends up in landfills. The organization works with individuals, businesses and organizations to source new and gently used clothes and equipment to redistribute to local schools in need.

• **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow the organization to plant more trees, expand Fast Forest to new cities and help deliver donations more efficiently.

**Carlotta Gilli, Para swimming**

Italy

• **Charity:** ToSwim
• **Story:** Carlotta Gilli learned about ToSwim in 2019 through her local network and was attracted to the organization's mission of making swimming more accessible to people in underserved areas and people with disabilities. ToSwim is an integrated SuperApp that digitizes the world of swimming and creates a new experience for all swimmers by involving them in a community where they can communicate, inform, play, compete and become active fans in competitions and aquatic events. The organization is currently working on two pilot projects: an eight-lesson course dedicated to introducing swimming to people with cognitive and physical disabilities and a light therapy project that helps people with cognitive issues induce reactions in their nerve cells through light stimuli. Carlotta is an ambassador at ToSwim and helps drive awareness while providing key input on projects.

• **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow ToSwim to install LED systems into six pools, impacting 10 people per hour and 600 people per week, per pool.

**Daniel Caverzaschi, Wheelchair tennis**

Spain

• **Charity:** “Lo que de Verdad Importa” Foundation
• **Story:** Growing up with a disability, Daniel Caverzaschi experienced how differently the world viewed and treated him. To help create a more inclusive and understanding world for generations to come, Daniel started volunteering with the "Lo que de Verdad Importa” Foundation. The mission of the "Lo que de Verdad Importa” Foundation is to disseminate universal human values in society, focusing on promoting and strengthening the humanistic values that make us all part of the same human family.
pillars that sustain the hope of a better world. To promote the humanistic pillars, the organization holds speaking events called “LQDVI congresses” to give people with disabilities a platform to share their stories and an opportunity for the community to engage and learn about the importance of humanistic pillars. With the “Lo que de Verdad Importa” Foundation, Daniel has participated in several LQDVI congresses and talked to more than 10 companies to help normalize the perception of people with disabilities.

- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will sustain initiatives that foster societal unity and promote reflection on core values like self-improvement, effort, integration, and sustainability through experiential workshops and activities.

Eilish McColgan, Athletics
Great Britain

- **Charity:** Giving Back to Track
- **Story:** Eilish McColgan founded Giving Back to Track after experiencing firsthand the enormous financial burden of participating in athletics at a high level. Giving Back to Track's mission is to break the barrier to entry into sports by providing free after-school clubs to deprived areas in Scotland and donating funds to local athletics clubs to use toward athlete fees. The organization has also given out five scholarships – inclusive of a small financial grant, athlete clothes and shoes – to young girls ages 16-20 to allow them to participate in sport at a high level. Eilish and her boyfriend, fellow Olympian Michael Rimmer, run the organization on their own and use 100% of the money raised on Giving Back to Track projects. To date, the couple has opened an after-school club in Dundee with plans to extend to Edinburg, Glasgow and Aberdeen.

- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Giving Back to Track to expand its free after-school clubs in Edinburg, Glasgow and Aberdeen and start a shoe and spike fund to source trainers for deserving athletes.

Ezra Frech, Para athletics
United States

- **Charity:** Angel City Sports
- **Story:** Ezra was born a congenital amputee, missing his left knee and shin bone. He played sports growing up competing against able-bodied athletes. In 2013, his father took him to his first Para competition, which inspired them to commit to bringing Para events to southern California and start Angel City Sports. The organization provides year-round adaptive sports opportunities for kids, adults and veterans with physical disabilities or visual impairments. Angel City Sports also provides free equipment, coaching and competitive opportunities, serving more than 1,000 athletes per year. The main event Angel City Sports hosts is the Angel City Games, a multi-sport event for adaptive athletes. With the help of his father serving as the CEO, Ezra can spend much of his time teaching adaptive athletes how to run, mentoring young people and fundraising for the organization.

- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Angel City Sports to host five multi-sport showcase days to enable new athletes to participate and learn about adaptive sports.

Griffin Colapinto, Surfing
United States

- **Charity:** To Write Love on Her Arms (TWLOHA)
- **Story:** As a professional athlete, Griffin Colapinto struggled with mental health and started journaling to help him process the emotional ups and downs. In 2022, Griffin and his brother published their journal with plans to donate the profits to a charity that provides programs to youth, specifically those struggling with depression, addiction, suicidal ideation and self-injury. They partnered with To Write Love on Her Arms (TWLOHA), an organization dedicated to these very causes. TWLOHA offers therapy scholarships, supplies grants to crisis service providers, fosters virtual and in-person communities and provides useful educational and conversational materials centered on mental health advocacy, suicide and self-harm prevention. Within its educational program, TWLOHA has created a week-long curriculum, which includes guided questions and activities to supply schools’ administrative teams with critical information to help them understand the current mental state and needs of their students. Griffin has participated in multiple speaking events, sells journals at events and promotes the organization across his social media platforms.

  - **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow TWLOHA to provide 96 high schools with its week-long mental health curriculum.

**Hugo Inglis, Hockey**
New Zealand

- **Charity:** Evidence Action
- **Story:** Hugo Inglis hopes that one day every child will be born into a world with the necessities they need to thrive. Unfortunately, unclean drinking water is responsible for more than 1.2 million deaths each year. With the mission of lowering this number, Hugo supports Evidence Action, an organization that provides and installs chlorine dispensers across rural areas in Kenya, Uganda and Malawi. To date, the organization has installed more than 39,000 chlorine dispensers to provide clean water to more than 6.8 million people, including more than 900,000 children under five years old. Hugo is also the Managing Director for High Impact Athletes (HIA), a nonprofit that connects athletes with the most cost-effective, evidence-based charities in the world in the sectors of global health and poverty, climate change and animal welfare. One of the charities HIA works with is Evidence Action.

  - **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Evidence Action to provide safe drinking water to 16,000 people for one year, saving about eight lives.

**James Farndale, Rugby**
Great Britain

- **Charity:** Athletes of the World
- **Story:** Growing up, James Farndale was surrounded by the most beautiful landscapes in the world and spent most of his time outside camping, hiking and mountain climbing. While studying for his undergraduate degree, he took a business sustainability strategies class and instantly knew this area was a passion point for him. From there, James started working with Athletes of the World where he, along with 600 other athletes, advocate for change and progress in the face of our world’s greatest environmental issues. The organization’s goal is to educate and empower athletes with the knowledge and skills to be compelling and trusted
messengers for climate issues and solutions and to develop and deliver high-impact campaigns to support athletes’ voices. During his time with the organization, James helped push World Rugby to publish an environmental sustainability plan. As a spokesperson for the cause, he has sat on panels, participated in podcasts and used his platform to educate others.

- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Athletes of the World to further support the development of their health and climate campaign.

**Marcus Mepstead, Fencing**  
Great Britain
- **Charity:** Trees for the Future
- **Story:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, Marcus Mepstead had the opportunity to pause and reflect on what he wanted to leave behind in his sport beyond the medals. With the mission to become a sustainable athlete, Marcus began researching different ways to empower others and connected with Trees for the Future, a leading charity in sustainable agriculture, tree planting and climate adaptation solutions for smallholder farmers. He loved the organization’s approach of tackling one of the largest root causes of climate change and deforestation: unsustainable land use. Trees for the Future utilizes the Forest Garden Approach with smallholder farms to sequester carbon, improve food security, increase income and promote gender equity. The organization is currently working with thousands of farming families across nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Aside from offsetting his own carbon footprint, Marcus contributes to Trees for the Future by fundraising, creating educational content and volunteering in Ugandan regions impacted by catastrophes.
- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Trees for the Future to plant 100,000 trees across Africa, supporting thousands of farmers and their communities for generations to come.

**Marin Čilić, Tennis**  
Croatia
- **Charity:** Marin Čilić Foundation
- **Story:** Marin Čilić grew up in a small community that was destroyed by war, requiring him to fight for every opportunity. After achieving success at the international level, he decided to pay it forward and help young people remove obstacles in the way of their own success. To do this, Marin founded the Marin Čilić Foundation, a nonprofit rooted in the belief that with adequate support, hard work and strong self-esteem, every child can make a lasting impact on the world.

  In February, the Marin Čilić Foundation awarded its fourth generation of scholarships to 10 young athletes and musicians. The winners received funding to use toward developing their skills further. The foundation also hosts a summer tennis camp for approximately 110 children, ages six to 16, for five days. To date, the Marin Čilić Foundation has impacted more than 4,000 children, awarded 102 scholarships, renovated six school labs and built four school sports courts.
- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow the Marin Čilić Foundation to build playgrounds and expand its tennis summer camp programming to other regions of Croatia.

**Melissa Stockwell, Para triathlon**  
United States
- **Charity:** Dare2Tri
- **Story:** In 2002, Melissa Stockwell was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army’s Transportation Corps. Two years later, during a deployment in Iraq, her HUMVEE was hit by a roadside bomb. The blast resulted in the amputation of Melissa’s left leg above the knee. She turned to sport as an outlet to prove to herself how much she could still do with just one leg. Melissa was able to try multiple sports and wanted to ensure that other injured veterans, adults and youths with impairments had the same opportunities she did. With this mission, she co-founded Dare2Tri, an organization that works to enhance the lives of people with physical disabilities and visual impairments through sport. Since 2011, Dare2Tri has served more than 1,000 athletes through its multiple sports camps, year-round in-person and online programming and clinics. Along with the day-to-day work of running the organization, Melissa serves as a coach and mentor and creates all programming.

  - **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Dare2Tri to reach more individuals through the purchase of new equipment and the payment of new staff members.

**Oliver Scholfield, Hockey**
Canada

- **Charity:** Racing to Zero
- **Story:** During his time competing with Team Canada since 2012, Oliver Scholfield has traveled all around the world and came to realize the astronomical amount of waste produced, specifically bottled water, at each sporting event. Determined to find a solution, Oliver started volunteering with Racing to Zero, a nonprofit born out of a desire for the sports sector to do its fair share in the world’s climate comeback story. From sport-based emissions to the amount of waste produced at various sporting events, Racing to Zero identified an outage of action at the community grassroots level and has stepped in to help local organizers produce more environmentally friendly events. Oliver has played a pivotal role in the organization by advocating for the cause, educating the public, providing support at events and calculating waste amounts.

  - **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Racing to Zero to hire more staff to collect and record data, invest in new data collecting technology, hire professional services to rebrand their website, social media, etc., and offset operating costs.

**Rhydian Cowley, Athletics**
Australia

- **Charity:** Bush Heritage Australia
- **Story:** Following the Black Summer Bushfires in Australia in 2019 and 2020, Rhydian Cowley became motivated to get more involved in protecting his country’s land. At that time, he started collaborating with Bush Heritage Australia, a leading conservation organization that protects ecosystems and wildlife across the continent. They use the best science, conservation and right-way knowledge to deliver landscape-scale impact while working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the agricultural sector to ensure their impact is deep, sustainable and collaborative. Rhydian is an employee of Bush Heritage Australia, working in the ‘Gifts in Wills’ team to help fundraise for its conservation activities, and he is a member of the organization's ‘Green Team’, which aims to reduce the environmental impact of the organization’s activities.
• **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow Bush Heritage Australia to support on-the-ground conservation work at one of their 42 reserves or fund their partnership work with Indigenous ranger groups.

**Sanne Van Dijke, Judo**
Netherlands

- **Charity:** 113 Suicide Prevention
- **Story:** In 2020, Sanne Van Dijke joined 113, the national organization for suicide prevention. 113’s mission is to prevent suicide with more open discussions that it’s okay to not be okay and to ask for help, and to provide additional access to healthcare resources. The organization also raises awareness around mental health, gives educational talks about suicide prevention and is a suicide helpline. Just 12 weeks after competing in Tokyo 2020, Sanne ran a marathon and raised more than 15,000 EUR for 113. She continues to promote the organization through media interviews and her social media channels.

- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow 113 to expand its educational program for young children and continue to raise awareness of suicide and suicide prevention.

**Sloane Stephens, Tennis**
United States

- **Charity:** Sloane Stephens Foundation
- **Story:** Throughout her tennis career, Sloane Stephens witnessed the positive impact that tennis can have on youths, but she recognized the economic and social barrier to entry, especially for youth from underserved communities and youth of color. In 2013, when she was just 20 years old, Sloane founded the Sloane Stephens Foundation with the primary goal of enhancing life through exposure to tennis as a basis for life-long learning and healthy lifestyle choices. The foundation’s vision is to develop a constructive future for young people. They are helping cultivate a new generation of tennis players by providing educational opportunities while encouraging a healthy lifestyle, proper nutrition and participation in physical fitness activities. The Sloane Stephens Foundation has worked with more than 15,000 kids in the Compton Unified School District and opened year-round tennis, education, mental health and financial literacy programs across 25 schools.

- **How the AFG grant will support the charity:** The grant will allow the Sloane Stephens Foundation to host its Summer Tennis Camp and Reading Lab, hosting 100 kids grade K-12 for eight weeks.