



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Omaha Sports Nonprofit EPIC for Girls' Girls Ref the World Program to be Honored as Project Play Champion by the Aspen Institute**

*(Omaha, NE)*- In a significant acknowledgment of its dedication to youth sports and community empowerment, EPIC for Girls is proud to announce its recognition as a Project Play Champion by the prestigious Aspen Institute. This accolade comes in light of the organization's innovative "Girls Ref the World" program, launched in September 2023 in collaboration with J's Braintrust, aimed at empowering girls and women of color in Omaha through sports officiating training.

Being named a Project Play Champion highlights organizations that take bold and meaningful steps in aligning with Project Play's strategies for making youth sports more accessible and impactful. Project Play Champion recipients are celebrated for their innovative approach to ensuring that sports serve the health and well-being of all children.

The "Girls Ref the World" program exemplifies what it means to be a Project Play Champion. By offering a comprehensive four-week academy for young women aged 14-24, the program not only teaches the basics of sports officiating but also imparts essential life skills. This initiative underscores the commitment of EPIC for Girls to not just open doors for girls and women of color into the world of sports officiating but to also pave the way for their empowerment and success both on and off the field.

Upon completion, participants are provided with everything they need to begin their journey as sports officials, including registration with the Nebraska State Activities Association and a stipend, ensuring they are ready to secure employment and certification as officials in Nebraska.

The recognition by the Aspen Institute as a Project Play Champion underlines the significant impact and the transformative potential of the "Girls Ref the World" program, said Kimberly Thomas, executive director for EPIC for Girls.

“As we celebrate this milestone, we remain dedicated to expanding our initiatives and continuing to make a positive impact in the lives of young girls and women through sports,” said Thomas added., executive director for EPIC for Girls. “We’d like to express our profound gratitude to the

Aspen Institute for this distinguished honor, J's Braintrust for their invaluable partnership, and all the participants who have embraced the 'Girls Ref the World' program with enthusiasm and commitment."

**About The Aspen Institute:**

Founded in 1949 as the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, The Aspen Institute is an international nonprofit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C., with campuses in its original home of Aspen, Colorado. The Institute is committed to driving change through dialogue, leadership, and action, addressing the most critical challenges facing the United States and the world.

**About EPIC for Girls:**

Dedicated to empowering girls and women of color through sports, EPIC for Girls funds 25 partner programs that enhance athletic skills while also building essential life skills. Through initiatives like "Girls Ref the World," the organization strives to create equitable and inclusive opportunities in sports and beyond.

**To request an advance interview or learn more about EPIC for Girls and its programs, please contact Josefina Loza at [office@lozafina.com](mailto:office@lozafina.com) or visit their website at [epicgirls.org](http://epicgirls.org)**