

Expanding Opportunities for Children

An Interview with Jaime L. Garcia, President and Chief Executive Officer, Andy Roddick Foundation

EDITORS' NOTE Jaime Garcia is the President and Chief Executive Officer at the Andy Roddick Foundation and previous Executive Director for Extend-A-Care (EAC) YMCA of the YMCA of Austin. She has worked in after school with EAC for more than 25 years. She was responsible for overseeing 105 after-school locations, 40 summer programs, 12 infant preschool programs, and 550 employees. She is certified by the state of Texas as a director of licensed childcare centers. She currently serves on the board of the Texas Partnership for Out of School Time (TXPOST) and served on the advisory council for YUSA's Character Development Learning Institute, as well as the Committee For Children's SEL Out of School Project Advisory Leadership Council. She served for six years on the National After-school Association (NAA) board of directors and is a graduate of Leadership Austin Class of 2017. Garcia holds a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree in business administration from Texas State University.



Jaime L. Garcia

generates a spark and excitement to build on throughout life.

Andy Roddick Foundation's (ARF) mission is to work with our community to expand opportunities for young people to learn, thrive, and succeed. We envision a world where all young people have endless opportunities to realize and achieve their potential.

Will you provide an overview of the work of the Foundation and its programs?

ARF is an operating foundation which means we create programs in addition to assisting other nonprofits. We rely on the public to help fund the Foundation's work in creating free, high-quality, high-impact summer learning programs and after-school programs. The program engages students in over 220 hours of hands-on academic and physical activities. The goals of the program are to reduce summer learning loss, reduce summer weight gain, and build resilient students who have the skills and traits needed to reach their potential – all while providing students with a fun and memorable summer experience. We

were honored to have received the 2019 New York Life Foundation Excellence in Summer Learning Award providing national recognition for the program outcomes.

Along with creating programs, ARF equips 45 after-school and summer camp providers with professional development, assessments/evaluations for quality innovations, and grant support. Together we all serve over 53,000 children in Central Texas.

We also lift the voices of children and families to impact regional change for all children through our advocacy efforts. Today, for every child that is in an after-school/summer program, there are three more waiting to get in. Every child deserves an opportunity to attend a high-quality after-school and summer program.

How did the Foundation adapt the way it works to address the challenges caused by the pandemic?

ARF provides a free six-week summer learning program for elementary-age children in several low-socioeconomic communities in Austin, Texas. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 summer program was

FOUNDATION BRIEF Andy Roddick started the Andy Roddick Foundation (arfoundation.org) to help more children discover their passions and help families and communities thrive. Whether it's creating nationally acclaimed after-school and summer camps, or equipping other after-school and summer camps, or impacting change for all, the Foundation leads the charge to take the time children spend outside the classroom – the times of day and months when they are most at risk and falling behind – and turn it into real opportunities so that every single kid realizes, "I can!"

What was the vision for creating the Andy Roddick Foundation and how do you define its mission?

Every child deserves to have opportunities for enrichment to support their academic learning and exploration when school is out during the afternoons and summer months. The beauty of elementary-age years is to have children find their passion through dabbling in a variety of activities such as sports, arts, dancing, yoga, sewing, exploring the city, and different interests to determine what activity



Andy Roddick spends time with students attending one of his foundation's summer camps, which gives kids new chances to grow in literacy, STEM, art, sports, and social and emotional learning – all during months and times of day when statistics show they're typically most at risk and falling behind

“My name’s on the door, but I credit our unbelievable staff and board. A great piece of advice my dad gave me was, ‘Surround yourself with smart people, and ask a lot of questions.’ I’ve certainly asked a lot of questions to our board members and staff, and they’ve been so generous with their time and insights. It’s because of this team that we have grown from a single summer camp for 75 kids in 2014 to serving 300 kids and families at multiple summer and spring break camps, family nights, and after-school activities, as well as providing 59 trainings for professionals at 111 after-school and summer camps serving approximately 59,000 kids and families.”

Andy Roddick

virtual, providing over 105 hours of synchronous learning each week accompanied by self-paced, hands-on activities. We didn’t want technology to be a barrier for families to participate; therefore, we provided the necessary technology and support such as tablets, headphones, hot spots, and/or Wi-Fi boosters. Children were also provided with printed lesson plans, summer camp supply kits, and weekly activity materials. We wanted it to be as simple as possible for parents and children – we knew connecting with them was vital to keeping them engaged with other children and still learning during the summer.

The program remained focused on its goals of reducing summer learning loss through strong academic engagement, increasing physical activity, and building resilient children who have the skills and traits needed to reach their potential – all while providing children with a fun and memorable summer experience.

At the end of the program, 98 percent of guardians believed the program helped prepare their child for the next grade. Children also reported positive academic impacts with 95 percent of children saying they learned new things in the program and 95 percent said they felt challenged in a good way during the virtual summer camp. Additionally, 100 percent of children surveyed felt confident that they would go to college.

How critical are metrics to measure the impact of the Foundation’s work?

Absolutely critical. Our vision is ambitious, yet realistic and critical for the future of our youth. ARF is proud to lead the way in bridging the growing 6,000-hour learning gap for children of low-income families. The largest learning gap between low-income and high-income families occurs outside of school. By the time a child is 12 years old, a child from a low-income family could have a 6,000-hour learning gap compared to his/her more affluent peers. This occurs because high-income families are spending 10 times more on enriching activities

such as summer camps, after-school programs, preschool, weekend trips, and reading time.

ARF data indicates that kids participating in ARF programming outpace peers in social and emotional development, school day participation, family engagement, and academics. With the ARF model, the learning gap outside the classroom is eliminated.

It is critical to collect meaningful metrics to measure our goals, successes, and impact. Staff review them weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annually. ARF’s work is creating transformational change for children and generational opportunities for families.

Will you discuss Andy’s passion and commitment for the work of the Foundation and how deeply engaged he is in its efforts?

Andy understands the significance in discovering your passion at a young age. His love for tennis started at nine years old. He had opportunities, options, and choices when he was growing up. That is what he wants to provide for children who are in under-served communities with limited opportunities for them to play, gain a skill, thrive, and succeed.

Andy had been heavily engaged in the Foundation since its inception. His leadership on our board and as the founder helps to lead the way for the staff. It isn’t just his business talent that helps ARF thrive, but his true commitment to the children and families. Andy finds pure joy out of spending time with the children during camp, taking in all the enriching opportunities at their fingertips, and having gratitude for the generous supporters who help ARF provide camps at no cost to parents.

The Andy Roddick Foundation has been in existence for over twenty years. Do you take moments to reflect and celebrate what the Foundation has accomplished over this time?

The work ARF does is important, meaningful, and takes dedication; therefore, the reflection each month/quarter to remind ourselves what successes we have had and

where we have learned from are valuable and shape our future. The celebration of accomplishments happens from the staff level to the board members. Each board meeting, we are intentional about reviewing our wins for the quarter. Every staff member and volunteer must be able to sit back and appreciate the work dedicated to our community and positive outcomes. This helps us stay centered, see the efforts from all angles, and stay focused on the goals ahead.

Each year can look different because the needs in the community change. The Foundation started with providing grants to the community, then we added the creation of our own programs to develop a model with impressive outcomes for children, then we added a network of after-school and summer camp providers to share our model, provide professional development and offer evaluations for quality innovation.

Reflecting and celebrating keeps us going, proud of the work, and ready to be nimble to the communities’ needs for decades to come.

What are your priorities for the Andy Roddick Foundation as you look to the future?

With academic and social challenges rising during the pandemic, children need support now more than ever; therefore, we didn’t skip a beat in creating our next three-year strategic plan to have the highest impact for children in Central Texas. Over the next three years, ARF intends to establish deeper relationships with our 45 after-school and summer camp partners to help more children increase their connection to the school, build and foster self-confidence, develop critical-thinking skills, and create healthy relationships with caring adults. Ultimately, ARF is singularly focused on increasing access to high-quality programs so every single kid has a chance to experience an after-school and summer program to best support their social, physical and cognitive development when school is out. ●