

Education, Health and Wellness, and Empowerment

An Interview with Ndamukong and Katya Suh, Co-Founders, Suh Family Foundation

EDITORS' NOTE Ndamukong Suh is an engineer, entrepreneur, investor and Super Bowl champion. Suh strives to inspire the next generation of young athletes and “unexpected” investors to create generational wealth through continued smart investment decisions. He is the Managing Partner of House of Spears Management, LLC, an investment portfolio including Ember Technologies, BTN, Seven Peaks Ventures, General Atlantic, and Andreessen Horowitz’s Cultural Leadership Fund. In the hospitality industry, Suh is the founder of Generals Restaurant Group, which owns restaurants in five U.S. cities. He is an investor in Pizzanna; has partnered with several high-profile groups and individuals in the ownership of four Blue Sushi locations, BAE’s Fried Chicken and Super Deluxe; and co-owns a Hyatt Hotel and Hilton DoubleTree Hotel. Also well known for his real estate investments, Suh is a Partner in both HMS Development, a company focused on mixed-use development projects, and Athletes in Real Estate (AiRE). Through the Suh Family Foundation, Suh has supported the Nebraska Athletics Strength and Conditioning Program, most notably establishing The Ndamukong Suh Scholarship benefitting the UNL College of Engineering. The Suh Family Foundation works hand-in-hand with communities to supply resources across three pillars that were pivotal to Suh’s own success: education, health and wellness, and empowerment. Suh attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where he became one of the most decorated Husker players in college football history and earned a degree in construction management from the UNL College of Engineering. He lives in Tampa, Florida with his wife, Katya, and twin boys.

Katya Suh is an entrepreneur and real estate agent with more than ten years of experience in hospitality, commercial property, and media. She has held prominent positions as a news anchor, restaurateur, and real estate agent, garnering the first-hand expertise and knowledge necessary to successfully invest in a range of industries. She is deeply invested in philanthropic endeavors, primarily as the co-founder and treasurer of the Suh Family Foundation. A native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, she holds a BA in mass communications from Kansas State University, where she was team captain of the women’s basketball team and a member of the Big 12 Academic Commissioner’s Honor Roll for the whole of her collegiate tenure.



Katya and Ndamukong Suh with backpacks for students

Will you highlight the history of the Suh Family Foundation and how you define its mission?

Ndamukong: Katya and I co-founded the Suh Family Foundation as a way for our family to give back and supply resources to communities across three pillars that were pivotal to our own success: education, health and wellness, and empowerment. We started in our own backyard of Portland, Oregon and are building national programs that are especially meaningful to cities that have had an impact on us like Detroit, Tampa, Miami, and Los Angeles. We want to make sure we are equipping individuals with the resources they need to sustain long-term success.

How did you decide on the three pillars of education, health and wellness, and empowerment to be the focus for the Foundation?

Katya: When we were building the Suh Family Foundation, Ndamukong and I were focused on sharing our own personal journeys and the key elements that helped us get to where we are today – education, health and wellness, and empowerment.

Education: A focus on education was instilled in Ndamukong at a young age by his mother, Bernadette, who had a long career as a teacher. My family shares that same passion, and Ndamukong and I met in college at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, which is a recipient of past Suh Family Foundation donations. We’ve done a lot of work in Portland around financial literacy. Over the summer of 2021, we brought a financial literacy camp to Portland Public Schools which helped 160 middle school students learn about money.



Katya and Ndamukong Suh working with students



Ndamukong Suh inspiring kids

Health and Wellness: Ndamukong and I were both collegiate athletes, so we have a deep understanding of the importance of nourishing the mind and body. This commitment led to Ndamukong's 10+ year career in the National Football League and our work here is centered around engaging and educating communities on health and wellness starting at a young age.

Empowerment: I'm especially dedicated to the empowerment of women, and the Suh Family Foundation has made a few donations in Tampa to support women looking for a fresh start. We also recently partnered with Voice, a digital art marketplace, on a fund committed to supporting independent artists from underrepresented and marginalized communities. This pillar is near and dear to my heart because I firmly believe that through knowledge and education we can create and foster communities where all can celebrate their diverse, yet shared experiences.

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

Katya: Right now, a key area for our foundation is financial literacy – we want to provide young people with the resources they need for a bright financial future. As former student-athletes, we both had to learn financial literacy via trial-and-error, which is why we are so passionate about helping kids learn about the topic before they graduate high school.

As I mentioned, in 2021, we brought a four-week financial literacy program to 160 middle

school students in Portland Public Schools. We also want to make sure kids have what they need for the school year, and love doing backpack giveaways to help students prepare for a year of learning.

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

Katya: We used the pandemic as a moment to reevaluate and really hone in on the areas and cities we wanted to dedicate the Suh Family Foundation to. Now that remote activities are more of a norm across the country, it gives us some additional avenues to have an impact on cities that are close to our hearts even if we can't be there in person.

How critical are metrics to measure the impact of the Suh Family Foundation's work?

Katya: Though metrics can be important, the true impact for us is measured through interaction and experiences. Whether it be a student's face after receiving school supplies and a backpack, or a woman moving into a furnished apartment after being a victim of domestic violence, the Suh Family Foundation considers the quality of the impact and the lives being touched to be more important than numerical measures.

Did you always know you had a passion to give back to the community and what has made the work of the Foundation so special for you?

Ndamukong: We've both been passionate about giving back from a young age. One of the first things I did after joining the NFL was give

a \$2.6 million donation to my alma mater, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. I worked with UNL to create a scholarship endowment for the College of Engineering, which I graduated from with a degree in construction management, and a second part of that gift went to Nebraska Athletics for its Strength and Conditioning Program.

Ndamukong, you are known for your talents and impacts on the football field, but you also are a leader in the business world through many ventures. Will you highlight your business initiatives?

Ndamukong: I've always aspired to be more successful off the field than on the field, and am an engineer at heart. As an entrepreneur, I strive to inspire the next generation of young athletes and "unexpected" investors to create generational wealth through continued smart investment decisions and partnerships. I'm personally very passionate about real estate and try to incorporate different ways to give back into everything I do – you'll see that many of my real estate projects in my hometown of Portland are dedicated to giving back to the community, specifically BIPOC small business owners and young professionals.

What are your priorities for the Suh Family Foundation as you look to the future?

Ndamukong: We'll continue to find partners that are interested in making a national impact. As we continue to move and grow as a family, the Foundation will follow suit, empowering as many people as possible in the process. ●