

Changing the World One Push-Up at a Time

Natick mom Kathleen Tullie left corporate America and started an initiative to improve kids' minds and bodies through exercise.

By [Faith Mayer](#) | January 19, 2012



In 2009, when Kathleen Tullie first decided to leave her position in corporate America, her goal was not to change the world. Today, meaning to or not, she is changing the face of physical exercise in America and throughout the world.

As the founder of BOKS, Build Our Kids Success, Tullie and a team of other moms are slowly infiltrating schools across the world to teach the importance of physical exercise on a child's body and brain. The program began at Memorial Elementary School in 2009 and was in all elementary schools in Natick by 2010.

"After leaving the corporate world of finance, I read a book by Dr. John Ratey called *Sparks*," Tullie said. "Sparks talks about exercise as an alternative to antidepressants like Prozac and Ritalin. I watched the kids in my neighborhood playing and realized how few kids are outside exercising these days, and I knew Ratey was onto something."

BOKS, as described in the group's executive summary is, "a before-school program that promotes the powerful link between physical activity and increased academic performance in school-age children. BOKS is an initiative of The Reebok Foundation, a registered 501c3 non-profit. BOKS' mission is to promote the profound impact of physical activity on a child's mind, body, and community."

Boks is expected to be in 64 new schools as of March of this year.

"The true reason for the outstanding success of BOKS is because of the amazing network of moms," Tullie said. "This started out as play time run by moms and has grown by leaps and bounds. I could never have done what I've done without the team of people I have behind me."

BOKS is totally volunteer run here in the suburbs, and the model was designed that way; however, it was soon obvious to Tullie and Jen Lawrence, the curriculum designer, that faculty would have to be hired to run the program in the cities due to the lack of parents at home.

"We pay faculty to go into Boston and other cities," Tullie explained, "as we simply don't have the mom power in those areas."

What started as eight moms playing with their kids in the morning has turned into a worldwide initiative with the Reebok Foundation behind us.

"This past October we spent ten days in Japan with a large retailer through Reebok," Tullie said. "They brought us over to train 300 people to bring BOKS to their schools. It was a surreal experience. Now, we have invitations to open in Panama, the UK, and Seoul, Korea."

Tullie is quick to acknowledge that none of this would have been possible without the support of the [Memorial Elementary School](#) staff.

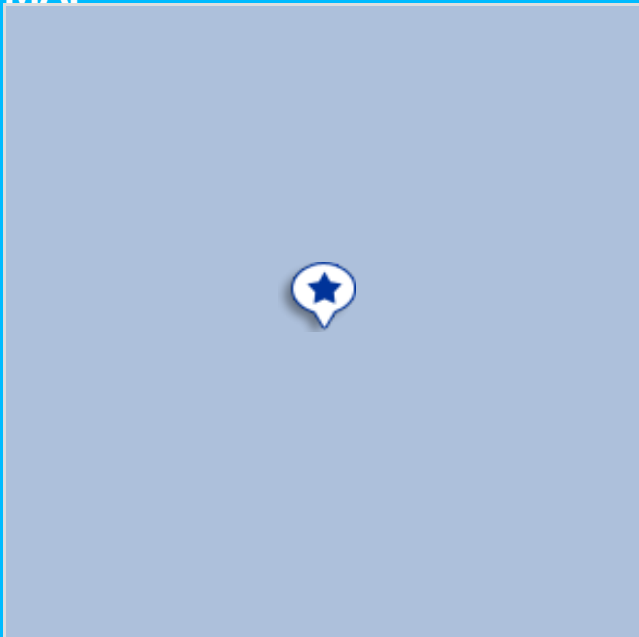
“We are proud of our success,” Tullie said. “But none of this would have been possible without Peter Sanchioni, the Natick superintendent of schools who saw the power of the program, and Jenny Pascarale, the Memorial PE teacher who was happy to do anything for us. Truly, the moms are the superstars. Without their commitment, this program would never have gotten off the ground.”

If you would like to bring BOKS to your elementary school, contact Tullie at Kathleen.tullie@bokskids.org. You can also learn more about BOKS by visiting www.bokskids.org.

PHOTOS (4)



MAP



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