

Youth Challenge

A History of Inclusion and Impact

Founded in 1976 by Mary Sue (Anter) Tanis, Youth Challenge began with just ten children and ten volunteers in Fairview Park, Ohio. Inspired by her experience working with injured Vietnam veterans, Mary Sue envisioned a community where young people with physical disabilities could stay active, connect with others, and build confidence.

Over the years, Youth Challenge has grown from a small local program into one of the most impactful nonprofit organizations for kids in Northeast Ohio.

1976 – Mary Sue Tanis founded Youth Challenge (then Fairview Specials) in Fairview Park with 10 kids and 10 teen volunteers.

1983 – Incorporated and began year-round programming

1984 – Renamed Westshore Recreational Challenge to reflect Cleveland's West Side focus

1989 – Expanded to Cleveland's East Side and Lorain County; became Youth Challenge (YC).

2008 – Completed \$2M campaign and moved into 16,000 sq. ft. headquarters in Westlake

2009 – Eliminated program fees, making all programs free for families

2012 – Expanded program offerings to include competitive Paralympic sports

2017 – Expanded Westlake HQ by 30% with new fitness center and arts space

2020 – Became a member of Move United, a national leader in adaptive sports

2026 – YC celebrates its 50th anniversary!

For media inquiries, please contact Carolyn Palmer

cpalmer@youthchallengesports.com | 400-892-1001 x113