

Project 201 Expands Youth Impact Through Mental Health Education, Coaching Leadership and New Community Support

New certifications, New York Giants Foundation grant and expanded youth programming set Coach Kellz and Project 201 to reach more young people across New Jersey

NEWARK, NJ, UNITED STATES, July 13, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Youth mentor Shawn "Coach Kellz" Kelly is expanding the reach of [Project 201](#) beyond athletics following a series of new appointments, certifications and community investments that will enable the organization to deliver youth mental health education, coach development and leadership programming throughout New Jersey.

The milestones, including a grant from the New York Giants Foundation, new equipment support from the New York Jets, certification through Rutgers University's Youth Sports Research Council, and appointment as a community presenter with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), reflect more than organizational growth. Together, they mark the evolution of Project 201 into a broader community resource dedicated to helping young people thrive through mentorship, prevention, education and trusted relationships.

While Project 201 first gained recognition for using sports to engage young people, Coach Kellz says athletics have never been the ultimate goal.

"The field is simply where the conversation begins," Coach Kellz said. "Every opportunity we've been given is another opportunity to reach a young person before life's challenges become overwhelming. Sports bring young people together, but mentorship, education and trusted relationships are what help them discover who they're becoming. That's the work we're



committed to every single day."

Across the United States, communities are placing increasing emphasis on youth mental health, resilience and early intervention. Schools, recreation programs and nonprofit organizations are seeking practical ways to equip young people with the emotional skills and supportive relationships they need to navigate increasingly complex social and personal challenges.

Shawn Kelly believes one of the most effective ways to reach young people is by strengthening the adults who influence them every day.

That philosophy has shaped his latest professional development.

He recently became a certified clinician through Rutgers University's Youth Sports Research Council, allowing him to train and certify volunteer coaches, recreation leaders and parents using nationally recognized standards for youth coaching. The curriculum extends well beyond the technical aspects of sport, incorporating child development, coaching psychology, communication, risk management and evidence-based practices that help create safe, supportive environments where children can flourish.

Rather than focusing solely on the athletes in his own programs, Coach Kellz now has the opportunity to multiply his impact by equipping other adults with the knowledge and confidence to become more effective mentors.

He recently became a volunteer presenter with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP), New Jersey Chapter, for the "It's Real: Teens and Mental Health" program. This is an evidence-informed mental health awareness program for middle and high school students.



Natanya Wachtel and Shawn Kelly - Game Mindset



Project 201 Mission Flyer

Through this role, I can present to schools, community organizations, youth groups, parents, coaches, and adults on youth mental health awareness and suicide prevention.

The appointment builds upon Shawn's existing work as a certified Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) instructor with New Jersey Mental Health Association, further strengthening Project 201's commitment to prevention and early intervention.

For Coach Kellz, each certification represents another opportunity to meet young people where they are.

Recently, he facilitated a youth workshop in Newark entitled Who Are You Becoming? The session challenged middle and high school students to think beyond athletic performance or academic success and instead reflect on the character, values and relationships that shape the adults they will ultimately become.

"Every young person deserves adults who believe in them before they fully believe in themselves," Coach Kellz said. "If we can create spaces where kids feel seen, heard and valued, we're giving them something much bigger than sports. We're helping them build a foundation they'll carry for the rest of their lives."

Supporting that expanding mission are new investments from two of the region's most recognizable professional sports organizations.

The New York Giants Foundation recently awarded Project 201 a community grant that will help expand youth programming and increase access to positive developmental experiences for children and families. Meanwhile, the New York Jets donated flag football equipment that will support the organization's growing youth flag football initiative, providing additional opportunities for participation, teamwork and leadership development.

While grateful for the financial support, Shawn Kelly views these partnerships as validation of a much larger mission.

"They're investing in young people," he said. "Every new partnership helps us create another opportunity for a child to be encouraged, challenged and reminded that they matter."

For [New Solutions Network](#) (NSN), Project 201 represents a powerful example of how communities can promote wellbeing long before formal intervention becomes necessary.

"At New Solutions Network, we believe lasting change happens long before someone enters a healthcare system or reaches a moment of crisis," said Natanya Wachtel, Founder, New Solutions Network. "It begins in homes, schools, community organizations and on playing fields—where trusted adults help young people feel seen, capable and connected. Shawn's work exemplifies that philosophy. By combining mentorship, evidence-based education and authentic

relationships, he's helping create healthier communities from the inside out."

Project 201's expanding portfolio of youth leadership workshops, coach education, mental health presentations and community programming reflects a growing recognition that the adults surrounding young people—coaches, parents, teachers, mentors and volunteers—play a vital role in shaping lifelong resilience.

As the organization continues to grow, Coach Kellz hopes to collaborate with schools, municipalities, youth organizations and community partners throughout New Jersey to expand access to these programs and strengthen the networks of support available to young people.

For Shawn Kelly, every new certification, partnership and opportunity ultimately serves the same purpose: helping more young people answer one of life's most important questions—not simply what they want to achieve, but who they are becoming.

About Project 201

Founded in 2022 by Shawn "Coach Kellz" Kelly, Project 201 is a New Jersey-based nonprofit youth development organization dedicated to helping young people build confidence, resilience, leadership and strong character through mentorship, behavioral support, mental health awareness, sports and positive life experiences. Named after the original 201 telephone area code that once served Paterson, New Jersey, where Coach Kellz's vision first took shape, the organization reflects a deep commitment to investing in the communities that inspired its mission.

Project 201 was born from his experiences as a county corrections officer, where conversations with incarcerated individuals revealed a common theme: many wished they had encountered a trusted mentor or positive role model before entering the criminal justice system. Those experiences inspired a prevention-first approach focused on surrounding young people with caring adults, meaningful opportunities and supportive relationships long before challenges become crises.

Today, Project 201 serves more than 500 youth and families across Hudson, Essex, Passaic and Bergen counties through one-on-one mentorship, leadership development, behavioral support, youth workshops, family engagement, mental health awareness presentations and sports-based programming. The organization partners with schools, community organizations and public agencies to strengthen the adults and communities that shape young lives.

Shawn Kelly serves as Founder and Executive Director of Project 201 and is a certified youth mentor, coach and mental health educator whose professional credentials include certifications through USA Boxing, ISSA, Rutgers University, Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. He is also a host of New Solutions Network's Game Mindset and Organized Minds, where he explores the connections between mindset, leadership, mental wellbeing and personal growth through conversations that inspire individuals and communities

alike.

Project 201 envisions a future where every young person knows there is a trusted adult and a positive place to turn before problems become crises.

About New Solutions Network

The New Solutions Network (NSN) is a multidisciplinary ecosystem built at the collision point of behavioral science, storytelling, and soul.

Founded by life science brand launcher Natanya Wachtel—National Science Foundation industry mentor, angel investor, and behavioral science alchemist—NSN reimagines how we heal, learn, and build systems that serve humanity. New Solutions Network (NSN) is a multi-division ecosystem where behavioral science, storytelling, and business design become infrastructure for human and enterprise transformation. NSN operates as a company made of companies, with coordinated divisions that turn insight into systems, content into commerce, and lived experience into measurable outcomes.

Structured for consciousness and culture and growth, NSN operates through four living divisions: Wellness, Enterprise, Media, and Advocacy in Action—each designed to transform pain into power and data into collective healing.

NSN Media — Narrative as Medicine.

NSN Media is a cinematic storytelling network that turns experience into evidence.

Every show is its own frequency—together, they form one nervous system of truth, redemption, and reinvention.

#GameMindset — Sports, Psychology & Identity

The field is mental, emotional, and cultural. Including What's Going On (Fox Sports Radio), this division reveals the emotional intelligence behind performance and the psychology that wins after the whistle and serves as the data set for our sports and wellness story library. Shawn has been a collaborator and guest host.

New Solutions Factory —

The enterprise arm of NSN. New Solutions Factory builds the behavioral infrastructure that powers transformation in companies, systems, and industries—melding behavioral science, data/analytics, turn human insight into organizational advantage. Offerings include Behavioral Operating Systems, scalable change architectures, and data-driven transformation engines, delivered by senior cross-functional talent with Fortune 500 and life sciences pedigree.

The New Solutions Network exists to build a future where healing scales, stories liberate, and every human being has the tools to remember who they are and what they're capable of becoming.

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