



## **DEFEND THE DREAM FOUNDATION PARTNERS WITH AUSTIN ED FUND TO RENOVATE AISD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES**

*Former NFL Player, Derrick Johnson, Gives Back to The Community*

**AUSTIN, TX (April 11, 2022)** - Derrick Johnson (DJ), a former Texas Longhorn and Kansas City Chiefs All-Pro linebacker, is returning to his Texas roots. The Waco native moved to Austin in 2019 after a successful 13-year career in the NFL to give back to his community through his non-profit [Defend the Dream Foundation](#). Through a new partnership with [Austin Ed Fund](#), Austin ISD's nonprofit education foundation, DJ is creating "Discovery Dens," in AISD elementary schools by transforming their libraries to inspire reading.

"My mom was a school teacher and growing up she imprinted on me at a young age the importance of education. Defend the Dream Foundation has become my passion and I'm so honored to help equip the leaders of tomorrow with the tools they need to build the future they deserve," said Derrick Johnson. "This foundation has so much to offer and I'm thrilled to use my platform to promote a cause so near and dear to my heart."

In 2012, while playing for the Chiefs, DJ founded the non-profit, Defend the Dream Foundation, which provides low-income and inner-city youth the opportunities and resources to reach their full potential in school and in life. In partnership with Kansas City Public Schools and Scholastic, Defend the Dream Foundation transformed libraries and unused areas in 16 elementary schools into reading areas called DJ's Discovery Dens. The non-profit also donated over 20,000 children's books to those schools.

Following his return to Austin, DJ and Defend The Dream Foundation are working with Austin Ed Fund to update multiple libraries across the district, starting with Oak Springs Elementary next month. The Foundation is investing nearly \$58,000 into the local elementary school by installing a multi-functional space for students to read and learn. Flexible furniture, bookshelves, and flooring will be donated along with books in an effort to update the current collection and better reflect the diverse student population.

"Austin Ed Fund inspires the community to invest in Austin ISD, and being able to partner with the Defend The Dream Foundation to advance our mission is very exciting for us," says Austin Ed Fund Executive Director Michelle Wallis. "This project will not only give students in libraries across the district comfortable spaces to read and learn, but also a new inventory of books where they can see themselves reflected in the pages."

Derrick Johnson is a former Texas Longhorn linebacker who was the 15th pick in the first round of the 2005 NFL Draft by the Kansas City Chiefs. In 13 seasons with the Chiefs, Johnson earned four Pro Bowls, two All-Pro selections, and retired as the Kansas City Chiefs' all-time leading tackler in franchise history.

He played for Mack Brown at The University of Texas at Austin. During his time at UT, Johnson won the Bronko Nagurski Trophy for being the Nation's top defensive player, the Butkus Award for being the Nation's top linebacker, and the Big 12 Defensive Player of the Year. In 2015 he was inducted into the UT Hall of Fame.

For more information about Defend the Dream Foundation, visit <https://derrickjohnsonfoundation.org/> and follow Defend the Dream Foundation on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#).

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**ABOUT DEFEND THE DREAM FOUNDATION:**

In 2012, former NFL player and University of Texas at Austin alumnus, Derrick Johnson founded the non-profit, Defend the Dream Foundation. The organization provides low-income and inner-city youth the opportunities and resources to reach their full potential in school and in life. In partnership with Scholastic, Defend the Dream Foundation has transformed unused areas in 16 schools into reading areas called "DJ's Discovery Dens." Additionally, the non-profit has donated over 20,000 children's books.

**ABOUT AUSTIN ED FUND:**

Austin Ed Fund is a recognized champion of Austin ISD. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Austin Ed Fund develops and stewards meaningful public-private partnerships that promote innovation and support opportunities that prepare Austin ISD students for college, career, and life. The organization has successfully served as a catalyst and facilitated over \$43 million in support for Austin ISD strategic priorities and initiatives since 2001. Austin Ed Fund empowers teachers and students through its grant programs, which have awarded over \$1.4 million to Austin ISD educators since 2015. For more information, visit [www.austinedfund.org](http://www.austinedfund.org).