

Empowering Girls' Engagement: Doing What We Can, Where We Are

By Jessica Nash, Executive Director, Rush Wisconsin | Rush Women's Alliance Coordinator, Rush Soccer

At Rush Wisconsin, I've learned that real change doesn't usually happen through big, sweeping initiatives. It starts with small, intentional actions taken right where you are. I try to lead with that reminder to *"do what you can, with what you have, where you are,"* and it has shaped how I approach leadership both locally and nationally.

Creating Pathways for Future Coaches

When I was a Director of Coaching, one of the biggest gaps I saw was the lack of female coaches. Research from the [Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport](#) shows that while girls' participation in sports keeps growing, the number of women coaching those teams has stayed far too low. That means fewer role models, fewer visible pathways, and fewer chances for girls to imagine themselves in leadership roles. We know it's hard to be what you don't see, so sometimes the simplest and most powerful thing we can do is go up to a girl and say, *"Have you thought about coaching? I think you'd make a great coach."*

That's why I started the **Emerging Coach Program**. I wanted to help high school aged female athletes see that coaching could be part of their future. Each participant works with a staff mentor, hears from women already working in sport, and earns their U.S. Soccer Grassroots Coaching License, all supported by the club. It's a small way to show young women that they belong in these spaces and that their voices matter.

Empowerment Every Day

Now, as Executive Director, I've tried to keep that same "do what you can, with what you have, where you are" mindset across our organization. Empowerment has to be something we build into our everyday work: *how we talk to players, how we mentor staff, and how we create an environment* where girls and women can grow into leaders. That is also why we added the [CoachingHER®](#) platform to our club to help our coaches create more player-centered environments that support, understand, and motivate girls to stay in the game.

Building Networks, Not Islands

In my national role as [Rush Women's Alliance](#) (RWA) Coordinator, across our clubs, there might only be one or two women working in coaching, operations, or administration. It can feel like you're on an island. The RWA helps connect women, *giving them a network to lean on and learn from*. Sometimes just knowing that someone understands what you're going through can make all the difference in staying in the game.

What We Can All Do

The Tucker Center's research continues to remind me that girls and women thrive when they feel competent, confident, connected, and cared for. That's something we can all influence, no matter our title or role. Whether it's a mentorship conversation, a shared opportunity, or a new initiative, we can each take steps that open doors for others. Empowering girls' engagement doesn't have to start with a big program or a national platform. It starts with a single question: *what can you do, with what you have, where you are?*