

# Rachelle Rutherford

## A Blend of Strategic Brilliance & Heartfelt Leadership



Rachelle Rutherford,  
CEO,  
Kids On The Move

**R**achelle Rutherford, CEO of Kids on the Move (KOTM), is a paragon of transformative leadership. Thanks to her strategic acumen and relentless drive, KOTM has blossomed into a powerhouse of innovation and compassion.

KOTM empowers families in complex circumstances by providing essential support, education, and therapies to children with special needs, mental health issues, and low-income families, breathing hope into their lives and laying a foundation for a thriving

tomorrow. By establishing a culture that proactively responds to community needs, KOTM ensures no child or family falls through the cracks. Their inclusive mindset has led to the development of five main programs: Early Head Start, the Autism Center, Early Intervention, Respite Care, and Preschool & Childcare, all of which demonstrate their commitment to empowering every family and creating a brighter future for all.

The pioneering leader's penchant for outside-the-box thinking has injected new life into KOTM's staff and programming. She constantly challenges the status quo, fostering an environment where innovation thrives. This forward-thinking approach has allowed KOTM to offer services that are effective and groundbreaking, meeting the ever-evolving needs of the families they serve. Her ability to envision and implement unconventional solutions has set KOTM apart as a leader in the non-profit sector and earned her the moniker of "Lion Chaser."

A "lion chaser" is a term inspired by the biblical story of Benaiah, a warrior who chased a lion into a pit on a snowy day and killed it, as described in 2 Samuel 23:20. This term has been popularized by author Mark Batterson in his book *In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day*, where he uses Benaiah's story to encourage people to pursue their dreams and face their fears with courage and faith. Rachelle is a lion chaser because of her willingness to take risks, confront challenges head-on, and trust in a higher power to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. She believes in beating the odds, facing their fears, and seizing opportunities, even when they seem daunting.

Rachelle's journey as a mother, abuse survivor, and self-proclaimed "lion chaser" deeply informs her leadership style in this multi-faceted organization. She leads with her heart, demonstrating a profound commitment to KOTM's mission. "Growing up, unfortunately, I did not have anyone to mentor or guide me. I found myself completely on my own at the age of 16 and had to learn very quickly to navigate the world on my own. While in many ways that was very hard, it was also a gift," explains Rachelle. "There was no one there to show me the way, but there was also no one to tell me that my dreams were impossible. So, I decided early on that there are no rules and no limitations to what I could do, and therefore, everything is on the table." Hence, becoming a true lion chaser.

Not having mentors or a source of inspiration has had other ripple effects on Rachelle's life. Rachelle shared that her faith has always been a compass for her life decisions, "He's been

my confidant, consultant, and confirmation that I'm heading in the right direction. That confidence in my creator has kept me on course even when others may challenge my goals or ambitions or deem something impossible."

As a Forbes author, Rachelle's book "Chasing The Impossible" will be published on October 1, 2024. It is currently available at all the major retailers for pre-order (Amazon, Walmart, Target, Barnes & Noble, and other bookstores). Being a lion chaser all her life, this book inspires and transforms the reader because they get an understanding of how one can alter their lives by changing their mindset. "I chase down some of the biggest challenges and leverage my skillset, talents, gifts and lead with compassion and love. We all have something to give and contribute to this world, make an impact, and be a hero in someone else's journey," she says. "We each have a mission and purpose to fulfill. This book is a clarion call to action for those who lead, build and create. The world waits for you to step into your greatness and answer the call. We all have the opportunity to choose, to be chosen."

Rachelle's strategic vision has been instrumental in reshaping KOTM. Under her leadership, the organization has burgeoned into a multi-million-dollar entity, poised to reshape and elevate the standards of comprehensive care for children with disabilities and delays.

### A Commitment to Lead Well

Rachelle's leadership at KOTM is about more than strategy and innovation. It's about empowering individuals to become the best versions of themselves and fostering a supportive and inspiring environment where everyone can thrive.

Rachelle encourages everyone at KOTM to believe they can shape their futures. She fosters an environment where team members feel valued and capable, driving them to take ownership of their roles and pursue their aspirations confidently. She also instills the importance of radical responsibility, challenging her team to own their successes and failures. This approach creates a culture of accountability and continuous improvement, empowering individuals to learn and grow from their experiences.

Another point of pride is the robust volunteer program which, thanks to strategic relationships Rachelle has fostered with the local hospital and medical school, brings in dozens of medical students each year who are required to meet community volunteer hours. The students have a chance to play and connect with children through the Respite Care program and, as a result, develop a deep sense of empathy and compassion. These volunteers leave KOTM and become practitioners with a greater understanding of the challenges these children and their caregivers face and a stronger commitment to their care.

### A True Visionary

KOTM is embarking on a bold mission to construct a state-of-the-

art campus explicitly designed to cater to the unique needs of the children that they serve and their families. The new campus, the first of its kind, will be a beacon of innovation in special needs care. It will feature a purposefully designed facility with world-class equipment and architectural design tailored to enhance activities, caregiving, education, and health services for children with special needs and developmental delays. The facility will provide a safe, nurturing environment for children to thrive and grow.

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To make this dream a reality, they must raise 150 million dollars. This may sound impossible to some, but after forty years of miracles, they are well-versed in taking what others deem impossible and turning it into reality. The new facility and campus will enable the team at KOTM to expand its capacity to meet the ever-growing number of children and families in need of their services. While monetary donations will be crucial in this process, they also hope to activate a community passionate about creating inclusive communities and setting a new standard for comprehensive care.

KOTM also plans to launch a new program, Family Support Services, which will provide a high level of coordination and administrative services for each family. Parents are often required to navigate a complex web for their special needs child, including multiple therapy services with long waitlists, education needs, work schedules, multiple providers with multiple sources of funding or insurance, and the list goes on. The new program will provide a specialist to streamline scheduling, coordinate solutions between



providers, and offer families additional solutions or resources they did not know were available. In line with the culture and legacy of KOTM, the program will continue to bridge the gaps in care and support and empower caregivers on their journey.

In tandem with the launch of the program, KOTM is exploring ways to incorporate mental health services and education opportunities into their program. Rachelle explained, “We all know the importance and challenges in having access to mental health services. We understand that this is an important need for children and families. We offer the highest quality of services and are actively pursuing partnerships with evidence-based providers such as The Hope Institute, which specializes in suicide prevention for children.”

### **Building A Great Organization**

With three advanced degrees in business, she possesses an analytical prowess that has revolutionized the organization's financial stability. When she took the helm, KOTM was merely breaking even. This economic growth has stabilized the organization and enabled the expansion of programs, advocacy efforts, and overall outreach, broadening KOTM's impact on the community.

Rachelle Rutherford revolutionized KOTM's financial landscape by diversifying its revenue streams with three key funding sources: state and federal grants, private insurance and private pay, and donations. She ensured KOTM proactively researched and applied for new grants annually, keeping track of renewal requirements and documenting unmet needs to strengthen future applications. By billing private insurance for services, KOTM created a sustainable revenue stream, allowing donation

and grant funds to stretch further and enabling robust financial planning for the future.

Additionally, Rutherford refreshed the approach to donations by fostering long-term partnerships with businesses and encouraging recurring monthly contributions from individual donors. Fundraising events were strategically integrated to boost community engagement and visibility. This dynamic, multi-faceted funding strategy not only provided stability and financial growth for KOTM but also empowered the organization to serve its community with greater excellence and sustainability.

While this may sound simple, incorporating all “three colors of money” is a feat many organizations are not able accomplish due to the strict regulations and requirements that come with each form of funding.

Empowering vulnerable children and families is a priority in Rachelle's professional life and in her personal life. She currently holds the dual title of Mrs. World America and Mrs. World America Fitness 2023-24 and runs with the platform of bringing awareness of how to prevent child sexual abuse. Today, she is proud to use her influence to educate more parents on protecting their children and serve as a Prevent Child Abuse Utah board member. Rachelle believes that prevention and protecting children is every adult's responsibility, and parents who have a child with a disability have a heightened concern for their child's safety and protection.

KOTM has been preparing to open a new facility to expand its Autism Services. The ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on July 31, 2024. This additional center will double their capacity to provide applied behavior analysis (ABA) therapy for children in the clinic. The organization has also applied for an Early Head Start expansion grant, which will double its capacity. The awards for this funding will begin to be announced in September 2024. “This would provide funding for us to construct a new building in Provo, Utah, offering eight new classrooms for children whose parents live beneath the federal poverty level. We have identified that 25% of the residents in Provo, Utah live below the poverty level. Therefore, this is the city with the highest need in our state. We hope to address this need,” elucidates Rachelle. “Our Respite Program runs completely off of donations and allows families to bring their child with a disability to our center once a month on a Friday or Saturday evening. We hope to increase donations and expand facilities to accommodate all different ages and abilities in our center.”

“As KOTM presses forward into its next chapter it's my hope that we can continue to encourage every man or woman to see their own true potential, to chase their dreams, no matter how impossible they may seem. It is my firm belief that our greatest calling waits on the other side of our fear, we simply have to be willing to turn and face it,” says Rachelle. “Whether as the CEO of KOTM, a speaker, author, mother, or friend, my passion is to stand with as many people as possible as they break through those barriers”. **ITO**