



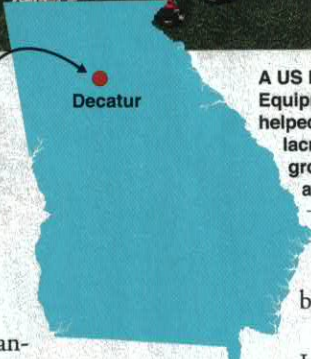
Town: Decatur, Ga.  
 Founded: 1822  
 Population: 18,147



Members: 54  
 Chapter: Georgia  
 Web: lacrossegeorgia.com

**Claim to Fame:**  
 Decatur has a thriving cultural scene and is known as one of the South's most progressive cities. In 1861, Decatur and surrounding DeKalb County voted against secession.

# 30030



A US Lacrosse Equipment Grant helped Decatur lacrosse get off the ground. More info at [uslacrosse.org](http://uslacrosse.org).

## Decatur, Ga.

By Mark Macyk

There's a famous scene in the erstwhile HBO series "The Wire," in which Bunk Moreland, the homicide detective, and Omar Little, the stick-up man, discover they'd been schoolmates in high school. Omar comments that Bunk was the "the first brother I ever saw play that sport with a stick." He meant lacrosse.

People are changing that kind of perception in Decatur. The Atlanta suburb features a diverse community in which 35 percent of students qualify for free lunches. It's also the home of a thriving lacrosse scene.

What started with a grant from US Lacrosse in 2002 and 40 boys in a local recreational league has grown into a full-fledged phenomenon. Decatur's boys' and girls' varsity teams are perennial playoff participants, and the youth league starts in first grade.

"The thing for me that's unique is the racial diversity," said Don Rigger, who helped found the program and coaches at Decatur High. "The high

school team is over 50 percent African-American. There's public housing, and a lot of kids that play live there. Their backgrounds are somewhat challenging in terms of economics, but they have embraced the game."

Rigger coached basketball in town and found a lot of his players played football in the fall, but nothing in the spring. The grant made equipment and league fees accessible.

"Now it's starting to feed off itself," Rigger said. "They've got friends, they've got cousins, and they've got

brothers. It's self-sustaining."

Credit also belongs to Open Door Lacrosse of Georgia. The foundation, run by Michael Butkus, has the mission to "promote the growth of lacrosse to non-traditional populations and areas throughout Georgia." ODL provides equipment, financial assistance and scholarships for camps and leagues. Decatur runs an adult 7v7 tournament to raise money for ODL.

"He's really helping underprivileged kids have access to things the wealthier kids take for granted," Rigger said. "I don't know how many thousands of dollars he's invested over the years. It's a lot. It's helped us attract and retain kids and have kids recruited who never thought they would be."

Take Satrick Green (No. 1 in photo above). A captain at Decatur High last spring, Green picked up the game as a fourth-grader because his mother was a supervisor for the Department of Recreation and would be there anyway. Next spring, he will suit up for Division II Limestone College in Gaffney, S.C. **LM**

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