

NorthStar News

The Newsletter of NorthStar Soccer Ministries



PERSPECTIVE BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PAUL NEVILLE

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PERSPECTIVE	1
CELEBRATION REPORT	2
BROADENING OUR REACH	3
DEEPENING OUR IMPACT	4
HOW TO GET INVOLVED!	6
CORE VALUES	8

**NORTHSTAR
SOCCER MINISTRIES
promotes opportunities
for investment in the
lives of urban youth in
Birmingham by providing
a high quality Soccer
Club within a holistic,
Christian environment.**

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Missing players, limited field access, masks, health questionnaires, no team benches. These are the things that characterize the Fall season this year. But, a step up from the Spring season—which after a brief, rain-filled but normal start—came to a sudden and complete halt.

As you might expect, NorthStar has seen a drop in contributions. That is a concern and I do appreciate your prayers and your contributions to help us turn that corner.

Bigger than the impact on our organization is the impact on kids and families. Depression and worse in kids. Learning loss with virtual and blended learning arrangements having a disproportionately large impact on those with the least means.

I read about job loss and economic impact disproportionately impacting many of the families we serve. All of this on top of the very real health challenges many have faced.

NorthStar cannot address all these things. What we can and must do is be poised to roar back to full operations as quickly as possible. We must do all we can to make up lost ground with our kids. The *Let's Move* pro-

gram described in these pages is one plan we have developed to do just that.

In planning Let's Move I realized that we would need a part-time Coordinator to help manage the program. I have selected a NorthStar parent who has the right experience and connections to fill that role but who has also suffered loss of income directly due to the pandemic.

By design I hope to squeeze out as much positive impact from this new initiative as possible. NorthStar will roar back to life with a program that was needed even before the pandemic. As we do that we will also make a small contribution to the economic well-being of a NorthStar family and, by extension a micro-contribution to the economy of our hurting community. I hope *that* gets you excited and that if you have the means to help, you will.

Paul Neville

NorthStar Celebration—pandemic style

On November 14, 2020 at 6:00pm a few of us gathered for the annual NorthStar Celebration! This is our annual banquet at which we typically do 3 things:

- Celebrate the ministry accomplished in the year
- Talk about the ministry vision for the coming year
- Gather resources (financial and volunteer commitments) to help achieve next year's ministry vision

Thanks to **Shades Valley Community Church** for hosting this event for the 8th year in a row! It was very odd to look out over the room to see a scattering of tables with about 25 people seated. Typical attendance is 120-130. This year we launched our first ever Live Stream version (which you can still find the link on our website). About 40 of you watched tuned into the event that way.

Contributions through this event were down, following the general pattern of the year. We did net \$13,000 from the event. All things considered that wasn't bad.

Testimonial



A highlight of the evening was hearing live from Fredrika Dunson (left). If you want to jump right to it on the video then at the 14th minute you can get the introduction followed by Fredrika reminiscing on her NorthStar experience from 2012-2018. She lists 10 different NorthStar coaches who worked with her over the years.

Today Fredrika is a 10th grader at Ramsay High School and playing at the top level of Club Soccer as a member of the Hoover-Vestavia 2005 girls team (competing in a regional league). Although she has gone far beyond what any NorthStar team could offer. NorthStar continues to support her in her training and development *and* she will be serving as an Assistant Coach in the new Let's Move program this Spring!

The NorthStar Celebration 2020
was *again* presented by:



Additional Sponsorship Provided by:



Table Sponsor-



Featured Speaker—Satara Murray



The picture at the left was the highlight from our 2016 news-clip featuring Satara after she spoke—live and in person—at the Celebration that year. She also led a skill clinic for NorthStar kids. This year—due to both the pandemic and Satara being in the middle of the season, in Norway, we settled for a recorded speech.

Satara drew on her own experience in talking about the importance of Resilience—a core NorthStar Value that has wide application in this year of the pandemic.

Vision for 2021—Step 1: Broadening our Reach

In February 2018 NorthStar launched a new outreach program at Hemphill Elementary School in the West End Community of Birmingham. The school is less than 2 miles from our practice site at McClendon Park, outside of Legion Field Stadium. But when we launched the after-school soccer program there was not a single student from the school already participating in our evening soccer program. By adding that after-school program we were reaching new kids. **Three years later** we are poised to extend this opportunity through a new partnership with Birmingham City Schools. Let's Move is the name BCS uses for all their elementary school athletics.

Let's Move with NorthStar Soccer, will be a 4th & 5th grade school-based league operated by NorthStar. Practices and games will take place after school (we hope to have after-school games, there are a few hurdles still to cross for that). The promotion of the program will be city-wide, but we plan to push it in schools where we are already connected. Teams will be coed and play 7v7. Some schools—Hemphill, Tuggle, Glen Iris (for example) - where we have strong connections may have 2 teams. We expect promoting soccer in schools that are new to us will be difficult so we will focus on our established schools and run the program well with them, setting the stage to expand to more schools in 2022.



Above: Spring 2019—5th grader Roderick playing for the Hemphill team in NorthStar Intramural League. Below: Fall 2020—6th grader Roderick playing for NorthStar Club Team. Roderick got started with NorthStar Soccer through our Hemphill outreach program in 2018. Today he is a top player for our Club Team and is in training with the Alabama Soccer Association advanced player program (ODP). As we expand from Hemphill Outreach to Let's Move at multiple city schools we will provide more players the opportunity to develop as Roderick has.



Hemphill 4th-5th grade girls. Spring 2018

Tentatively the league will take place in February and March. Covid conditions likely will force a delay. After surviving 2020, flexibility is an ingrained habit! We plan to invite our Let's Move kids participate either on an existing Club Team or on special Tournament Teams we will create. In this way we expect the Let's Move program to immediately bring in new players to our Club Team program.

We don't have the capacity this year to bring after-school soccer to the younger grades. We will promote the opportunity of participating in our existing evening Intramural program team practices. We expect some will and in that way the Let's Move program will broaden our reach with younger kids as well.

Let's Move Sponsorship Opportunities

Help NorthStar get this exciting new program fully funded by becoming a sponsor!

- Let's Move program Sponsor (\$5,000) – Company or other logo prominently featured on all Let's Move uniforms & program reporting/field sign
- School Sponsor (\$3,500) – Company or other logo featured on field sign and on two teams from the same school plus featured as supporter for Intramural program(K4-3rd grade) community league
- Team Sponsor (\$1,500) – Company or other logo featured on one team jersey and program reporting
- Team co-Sponsor (\$500) – Company or other logo featured in newsletter and program reporting
- Individual player sponsorship (\$150) or other contribution (any amount is appreciated and helpful)

Vision for 2021—Step 2: Deepening Our Impact

For 2021 and beyond NorthStar is looking to not merely reach more kids but to continually increase the quality of the impact we make in each child's life. Here are some of the categories and some specifics we are targeting for 2021:

- Stronger Individual player skill development: **Why?** Obviously more skilled players help our teams do better on the field. More importantly, stronger skill development opens up more soccer opportunities for more players beyond NorthStar. Most significantly, stronger skill development leads to increased confidence and is a transferable experience for the player potentially leading to the following internal conversation, 'As a result of working hard on my soccer skills I have gotten pretty good. If I work hard in school too I can do well there too.'
- Player Retention—**Why?** Experience has shown us that when players leave NorthStar for other clubs before they are ready & without our direct support, they tend to drop out. We want to keep more players playing at NorthStar for as long as we can. Keeping them playing longer means a stronger likelihood of developing an active lifestyle that will last into adulthood. It also means we have more time to build character and shape faith commitment..
- Deeper Character Development—**Why?** The opportunity to develop values & teach our kids to function well on teams is wide open on an athletic team.
- Spiritual Nurture—**Why?** Sharing the Good News of the Gospel is foundational to our ministry.



Left: NorthStar v NorthStar girls scrimmage game on March 7—the Saturday before the shut down. Seems so long ago.

Steps to achieve our impact goals

- Broadening our reach through *Let's Move* will enhance our ability to increase skill development & improve player retention. How? The more players we have coming into the Club Team program the more opportunity we have to build teams on various skill levels—keeping those players engaged with us longer.
- Focus on our Values—Responsible, Resilient, Reverent—is critical. As a Club we will constantly reinforce these values through modeling them and incorporating them into practice structure, discipline strategy, everything. Off season skill training opportunities for older players
- Leadership Development for older players—in 2021 a task of NorthStar Interns is to train our older players to provide leadership in the program. Those older players will maximize their own learning when they are challenged to teach and to lead. Likewise the development of our younger players is greatly enhanced when older near-peers have a strongly positive presence in their lives.
- Spiritual Development will grow in two ways next year—Intern Katie Newton has developed basic devotional material that connects our Values to Bible Study. Secondly, Katie and intern Madison Lockrem and others will be leading bible study/mentoring groups with older players.



Left: summer intern, Claire, leading skills session with a small group of U14 girls back in July.

Deeping Our Impact Through Mentoring Relationships

Katie Newton connected with NorthStar as a freshman at Samford, volunteering with new Hemphill outreach program back in 2018. In Spring 2020 she returned to



Katie as a volunteer with Hemphill outreach program in 2018.

volunteer more time—but the pandemic hit and the season came to an abrupt halt after it had barely begun.

This Fall Katie served as a part-time intern while completing her final semester at Samford. Her original assignment was to serve as a coach/mentor for the planned NorthStar U14 girls team. When

that team folded due to too many girls pulling out on account of Covid concerns, we merged four remaining girls in the age group with the coed U14 Holy Rosary Soccer team. The primary assignment was to support the four NorthStar girls on the new team where they didn't know the players, practicing on a different field, different environment, etc.

Along the way she quite naturally connected with *all* the girls on the team—Holy Rosary and NorthStar. In October some of the missing NorthStar girls were cleared to return. We invited 3 of the Holy Rosary girls to join us and formed a team of 16 girls to play in a local tournament in November.

Here are a few highlights from Katie's end of the Fall ministry update: 'I was able to create deep connection with several of the girls. I was able to share the Gospel with them and remind them how loved they are, especially as we encountered struggles throughout the season. These conversations were such a gift and I was able to grow so much through each of them! During these conversations I was able to see these girls change the way they viewed themselves; they began to believe me when I said I loved them . . . These breakthroughs took a long time, but at the end of the season I saw them encouraging each other rather than just the coaches en-



NorthStar Intern, Katie Newton, greeting two of the 'Holy Rosary girls' after the last game in the November tournament. Girl on the left made a dazzling goal toward the end of that game.

couraging them.' (You can find her full update on the NorthStar website—northstarsoccerministries.org/staff-profiles. Click on the link at the bottom of her profile.)

Katie graduated from Samford in December and will shift to *full-time* internship status now through May. Pray for her impact with the U14 girls. We also anticipate her working with the new Let's Move program at Oliver School and Cornerstone *and* assisting to coordinate the East side Intramural program later in the spring.

NorthStar is always looking for volunteers and paid interns who want to use the game of soccer as a tool for ministering to youth. Maybe you know a teen, college student or young adult (or not so young adult, for that matter) who would like to give it a test run? Please send them our way!

Katie's position is funded through personal support contributions—currently they are pretty far short of what is needed to take her through May. Help us keep her focused on programs and not concerned about fundraising by making a special contribution toward her position! Use the enclosed response card or contribute through the website with a comment 'for Katie's support.'

Accomplishing the Vision in 2021—YOU getting Involved

Your financial support makes our programs possible.

Together we provide these programs to make a quality sports team experience—and all that brings with it to kids in the city. NorthStar is distinctive based on

- WHO we serve (all who will are welcome & encouraged to participate—we want a mix of socio-economic levels and a mix of ethnicities in our program—but we will always take steps to make sure low-income/hardest to reach kids are highly represented)
- Christian Discipleship—Devotionals are a part of our Intramural and Club Team practices (not in Let's Move public school teams but our goal is to get those players recruited to Club Teams)
- Player Development is more important than Team Wins

- Values Oriented—Winning games is a very appropriate goal. But preparing for success in life is our grounding purpose. We do this through a focus on our three values: Responsible, Resilient, Reverent

Like the sound of this? Your financial support is critical to making it happen. Not only will your financial support provide all the above for kids in our program. It will provide life-changing volunteer opportunities for teens, college students, adult volunteers—*maybe even for you!*



How to Make a Financial Contribution?

- **Mail a check**—use the enclosed envelope and response card to mail in your contribution today!
- **Send a check electronically through your bank**—directing your bank to send NorthStar a check works very well for us
- **Contribute online**—go to our website (www.northstarsoccerministries.org) —and make a contribution. You can also set up a regularly recurring contribution (sustaining support). Our monthly supporters are a huge blessing to the ministry. Please consider joining them!
- **Designate NorthStar Soccer Ministries as your preferred charity when shopping on amazon**—a small percentage of the money you spend will be donated to NorthStar by amazon.



How Do You Want Your Gift Applied?

See the enclosed card for specific levels. Currently we have the following funding priorities-

- Team or Player sponsorship for the Let's Move program
- Staff Support for Intern Katie Newton
- Staff Support for Paul Neville and/or General Ministry Support (wherever needed most)

Nothing Substitutes for Giving Your Time!

It's true. Most appeals, even from us, are for funding. Your financial contribution is very important to us. All that you read about in this newsletter and on the website can't happen without generous financial support from YOU!

But the biggest financial contribution doesn't rate ahead of giving of yourself through your time. *Every Moment Matters* so we will train you and prepare you and set the stage for high impact. Along the way—you will be

changed. There is no substitute for it. Get involved directly with a team of kids. If you can't do that—send us your teenagers or college students! Finally, consider giving your time in a way to help make the volunteer/youth impact opportunity available for others to experience.

Spring Coaching/Assistant Opportunities:

- After School hours (both paid and volunteer) with Let's Move



Director's Notes—by Paul Neville

Above: Me with girls team in 2017. Of these seven girls, five are still NorthStar players (recent pictures below). Four of them were on the team this fall –2020 (I hope to have the fifth one back in the Spring, she almost joined us but was pulled out due to Covid concerns). By the time the top picture was taken I had already coached all of those girls for 3 years. That's 6 years total (and I was assisted by a string of college girls along the way for most of those years—they get credit too). I have coached them now. All of them played NorthStar Soccer before I became their coach so 8-9 years with NorthStar! Time for some payback! This Spring I hope to begin moving most of them (and others) into Junior Assistant Coaching Roles that we are in the process of developing.

JOIN ME! By all means try it out for a season. Maybe you too will catch the bug and want to make a long-term investment of time!

(note—Girl on the right in the goal keeper uniform is featured on our fall program video. Check it out on our website.)

- Evening volunteer hours with Club Teams—typically ages 10-14 with Saturday games in the metro area

- Evening volunteer hours (one or two nights) with NorthStar Intramural—ages 4-10. Saturday morning games at Cornerstone Field in Woodlawn

Our coaching opportunities range from skilled to 'I know what a soccer ball looks like, at least'. The one absolute pre-requisite is a love for kids.

But coaching is not the only Volunteer option. We also need marketing volunteers and facility management volunteers.





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Club Registrar: Michelle Chambers

Program Intern: Katie Newton

Marketing Intern: Madison Lockrem

www.northstarsoccerministries.org

NORTHSTAR SOCCER MINISTRIES— HELPING YOUTH FIND THEIR DIRECTION

The NorthStar player is:

Responsible – takes care of self and carries through on commitments to the team

Resilient – works hard to reach goals and learns from mistakes – knows losses & setbacks are an opportunity to learn and get better

Reverent – on and off the field seeks to follow the two great commandments: loving God and treating neighbor (teammate, opponent, referee, everybody) in the same as would wish to be treated.

Volunteer or Contribute to help us instill these values in our youth. Help us broaden our reach as the pandemic retreats (soon) and seek to make up for lost time with our kids!



NorthStar has a new twitter account. Help us give it a boost! Follow us @SoccerNorthstar. While you are at it, go ahead and like us on Facebook too!