

NorthStar News

The Newsletter of NorthStar Soccer Ministries



OPPORTUNITY BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PAUL NEVILLE

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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.

NorthStar Values

- Responsible
- Resilient
- Reverent

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OPPORTUNITY has been our theme for the year. Reading that you may immediately think in terms of opportunity we seek to provide for the youth. Of course you are right to think this. These pages and my reporting throughout the year highlight the Opportunity NorthStar strives to develop for kids. We also highlight how some of them are capitalizing on that Opportunity.

But that is only half the picture. NorthStar is a tool (one among many) to provide Christians with Opportunity to give of their resources and skills in an impactful and meaningful way. It's December and that means a big push for **year-end giving**. NorthStar does need those financial gifts. At this moment organizational finances are ok —no unpaid obligations and we have cash in the bank. The financial report is good, but not great—income has been up from the previous year but so have expenses. Currently we are showing a loss for the year and are praying for significant cash contributions this month to overcome that (I will be posting an Annual Report on the website in January that will include financial details for the year). A strong year end giving will position us well for the planned program development you will read about in these pages.

So yes, I hope you will consider a year-end contribution to NorthStar, of whatever amount is right for you, and a regular financial commitment in 2022. But, don't allow such a gift to be the limit of your involvement.

The call, as followers of Christ, is to mirror God's lavish love toward us by our engagement with the world around us. We are called not merely to give from our resources but to give our very selves (Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:11-15). NorthStar is one tool available to help each of us discover the joy of engaging the world in this way. I hope you will let your financial contribution to this organization (and others) be a down payment on a new or renewed commitment to give of your time in 2022. I hope for many of you that will be NorthStar, but you should select one or a few that are the best fit for you. NorthStar will have a range of involvement opportunities from participatory (come try it out) to various levels of engagement. Of course we need people directly engaged with youth. Maybe you believe in the cause but are more drawn to work with adults in various aspects of supporting the cause? There are a range of those types of Opportunities as well. Contact me and together we will design the Opportunity that fits you!

Paul Neville

P.S.—for a reflection on what the picture above means to me personally, check out new blog posts on 'NorthStar Navigating' at paulneville.net

NorthStar Celebration!

Thanks to all who help make the NorthStar Celebration! 2021 a great success. On November 18 we gathered for the annual event at Shades Valley Community Church. Here are some highlights from the event for those who were unable to make it. *(thanks to Callie Davis for the photography)*

Run down of the Evening Schedule-

- **Emcee (and soccer Dad) John Mark McGaha** welcomed everyone and kicked off the official start to the evening
- **U12 Girls Team Captain/Chaplain, Sarah Grace Rogers** offered the prayer for blessing for the food and the evening program
- Guests enjoyed a great spread from Carlile’s Barbeque while listening a live performance from the **3 man band of Raymond Butler, Billy Crocker and Jack Swaim plus sound crew, Chris Zobrosky**. Thanks! Guests also bid on items in the silent auction.
- John Mark McGaha presented questions to our **panel of 3 current and former NorthStar players**
- Executive Director Paul Neville highlighted ministry accomplishments in 2021 *and* presented the 2021 **NorthStar Navigator Award to Harri Haikala**, Director of Holy Rosary Soccer (a strong partner with NorthStar Soccer Ministries)
- **Jay Heaps, President/General Manager of Birmingham Legion FC**, gave the keynote address in which he laid out commitments that organization is making to NorthStar Soccer for the coming year.
- **Board Chair Kevin Holdefer** encouraged guests register their commitment to respond to involvement Opportunities.
- John Mark McGaha closed out the evening.

The Panel:

Standing is emcee John Mark McGaha. Seated left to right are: Matt Dale, Sarah Grace Rogers, Akeriya Hamilton.

Akeriya (10th grader at Woodlawn HS) spoke about her transition from Holy Rosary/NorthStar player to referee and Junior Assistant Coach.

Sarah Grace (6th grader at Cornerstone School) spoke about her experience as Team Chaplain.

Matt (sophomore at Birmingham-Southern College) spoke about his NorthStar playing experience—being coached by a BSC student on the U10 NorthStar *Mighty Men* and his eagerness to return to NorthStar as a coach this spring to coach boys around that same age—a new set of “*Mighty Men*”?



The Award:

To the right is Harri Haikala receiving the **NorthStar Navigator Award for 2021** from Akeriya Hamilton.

Harri was the Director of Highlands Soccer Club for many years. In 2013 he became the founding director of Holy Rosary Soccer, which operates out of Holy Rosary Catholic Church and targets youth in the Gate City community of eastern Birmingham. In January 2019 NorthStar and Holy Rosary began actively working together. In the 5 soccer seasons since our partnership has continued to grow with mutually supporting program and field management commitments.

Presenter Akeriya Hamilton began playing soccer through Holy Rosary when she was in middle school. Working together, both ministries (with additional collaborative support from Oak Tree Ministries) are providing Akeriya leadership development opportunities flowing from her soccer experience. This is only one example of the fruit from Harri’s commitment.



A ‘**NorthStar Navigator**’ is someone who has shown a strong commitment over many years to train, mentor and guide youth to navigate a Christ honoring path in life. The Navigator seeks to instill knowledge, skills, moral character and faith commitment in youth. Coaching knowledge is highly valued at NorthStar. But the creation of this award is specifically intended to highlight what we value the most. On the field team success is a highly prized by-product of quality, whole-life investment in youth. NorthStar Navigators understand all of this and are an example to all of us.

2019 Honorees—Raymond Butler & Michelle Chambers

2021 Honoree—Harri Haikala

The Speaker

NorthStar had the honor of Jay Heaps serving as our speaker for the evening (see *bio* to the right). Jay told us about his experience as a Duke soccer player and how he came to walk on as a basketball player in addition. Then he proceeded to energize the crowd with his announcements on Birmingham Legion commitments in support of NorthStar Soccer.



About our speaker, Jay Heaps.

Jay is the President & General Manager of Birmingham Legion FC. In that post he has helped lead the team to 3 consecutive USL Championship League playoff appearances.

Prior to coming to Birmingham to help launch our team, Jay spent 6 year coaching the New England Revolution (MLS). Before coaching he was an MLS player for 11 years (Miami Fusion, New England Revolution). He was also called up to the United States Men’s National Team in 2009 and earned four caps in the 2009 CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Before being drafted into MLS Jay played soccer at Duke and earned the Hermann Trophy Award (annually given to the top collegiate soccer player nationally) as a senior as well as being honored as the Scholar-Athlete player of the year. Jay was also a walk on basketball player at Duke.

It was a great honor to have Jay volunteer his time to speak in support of the mission of NorthStar Soccer.

Birmingham Legion—Commitment to NorthStar players

For 2022 Birmingham Legion is making the following commitments:

- Providing Legion players to serve as regular guest coaches in the NorthStar After-school program at 2 Birmingham City elementary schools
- Providing season passes to NorthStar players to attend Legion matches
- Providing a series of skills clinics for NorthStar players
- Providing major support for uniform kits for NorthStar Club players



Right: NorthStar players receiving instructions on how to be ball kids at a Birmingham Legion match. We look forward to more impact through this partnership in the coming year!



Anticipated Impact

- Legion players serving as regular guest coaches at Hemphill Elementary and West End Academy is expected to boost participation in both the short and long-term
- We also expect it to boost the long-term vision for students and parents. This will help keep our players involved longer—maybe a few will develop and reach a long-term goal of playing soccer in college but, more significantly, many will simply be with us longer with increased opportunity to impact lives with our Values for success in Life!
- This relationship will help us in volunteer recruiting in general.
- We believe that through this experience we can have a positive impact on Legion players themselves!
- It will be fun! (sometimes wonder if FUN shouldn’t be added as our fourth value? All of us learn best when we are having fun!)

Celebrating our Event Sponsors

The NorthStar Celebration was presented by:

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Alex & Kristi Atwater

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Table Sponsors provided Additional support for the Event:

ACci — Business Planning Inc — Raymond & Claudia Butler

Dance-N-Things — Chambers Total Body — Elegant Earth

Sparkhound — The Washington Group



Silent Auction & Door Prizes made possible by:

Birmingham Legion FC — Birmingham-Southern Men's Soccer Team — Pinnacle Aerospace Academy — Kim Rollins



The annual NorthStar Celebration! is always intended as a reflection on and celebration of ministry accomplishments in the year just completed. BUT it is also a time to see how the current year has set the stage for more impact in the coming year. Some years that growth is more aspirational/hoped for than clearly set. This year we are very pleased to see aspirations and committed resources/opportunities coming together in a very strong way. We need both funds and volunteers to fully act on the opportunities described in the next three pages. We do hope you will consider finding your place (directly or indirectly) in supplying one or both of those critical resources.

Sponsorship and Giving Opportunities

As we Celebrate the support the above sponsors provided it is not too early to make plans to join them next year. **NorthStar Celebration! 2022 is tentatively set for November 17.**

In the meantime, there are plenty of opportunities to get involved financially to support the exciting developments described in these pages. **Contact us today if you would like for your business or group to get a spot on a Club Team jersey as a Team sponsor or on a banner as a field sponsor.**

Individuals are also welcome as team or field sponsors and you may choose your favorite charity to be honored by your sponsorship gift (oops! We mean 2nd favorite charity!) 🤔

Individual contributors are encouraged to consider a sustaining monthly contribution (or whatever frequency you choose). This bolsters our planning with a predictable cash flow.

Whatever you choose, **a year end contribution now will help us to end the current year in the black and keep our cash reserves strong as we move into the new year.** Even with strong support from Birmingham Legion and new commitments for student volunteers for the After School program, there are other costs flowing from the plan to grow that program. Your generous year end contribution will help us plan for that program growth and may make the difference between choosing to go to 2 schools or 3 in the coming spring.

Also, Paul Neville currently is the only full time staff at NorthStar Soccer Ministries. From an administrative and program management point of view it is time to grow back to 2 full time staff. Your support will help us increase our staffing to the needed level.

Financial transparency—Our most recent form 990 is posted on our website or can be obtained by emailing Paul Neville at paul@northstarsoccerministries.org. In January this newsletter will be expanded to include additional program details plus a financial report. That too will be posted on the website by January 31.

2022 Program Goals —NorthStar After School Outreach

School Outreach. - NorthStar began our after-school soccer program at Hemphill Elementary School (in the West End community of Birmingham) in 2018. Attracting the staffing to maintain that program and operate it well has been a big challenge. But pulling back from it has not been a consideration because it is core in terms of mission. A major goal of NorthStar is to make sure we are reaching the hardest to reach kids. The most sure way to do that is to *bring the program to them and do it in a way that minimizes barriers*. Check out these 3 converging developments that are leading us to not only plan to keep the program going at Hemphill but to add another—maybe two—additional schools

- **Birmingham Legion FC partnership**—it turns out the after-school time slot is a preferred time for getting professional players involved. Couple that with Legion, under the leadership of Jay Heaps, having a strong interest in exactly these same kids and we have a very excited resource for supplemental practice coaches.
- **Samford Intern**—In the spring semester Samford senior Drew Laney will do his Sports Administration internship with NorthStar. Drew will recruit Samford students to serve as volunteer coaches at both Hemphill and West End and will assist with administering the After School Soccer program at both those locations. Of course NorthStar will need a replacement for Drew after the spring semester—working on that.
- **West End Academy partnership**—This Fall a teacher at West End Academy who was familiar with NorthStar Soccer at Hemphill contacted Executive Director Paul Neville about bringing the program to that school as well. Check out these facts: West End is down the road from Hemphill, the elementary school was built on the grounds of a former high school *with an unused football field just waiting to be repurposed*, NorthStar already has kids from this school involved on our younger Club teams (and we have been driving them across town to team practices at Cornerstone Field in Woodlawn—on the east side). West End Academy wants NorthStar Soccer and it is an ideal location on all counts and has an ideal facility for the program.

Impact of the After School Outreach program

The after school soccer program was abruptly shut down in March 2020 (along with everything else) and remained closed for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 seasons.

It was thrilling to see a large number of Hemphill Elementary students we had missed for that year and a half returning to the program for the Fall of 2021. We were also excited to welcome many students out for their first NorthStar Soccer experience. Below are a few Fall highlights:

- Two boys who got their start at Hemphill After School were on the NorthStar U14 Club team this fall
- 2 other former Hemphill students (still elementary age but now at West End Academy) were on the U11 Club Team
- one 5th grade Hemphill boy was 'moved up' to the U11 Club team by the end of the Intramural League season. (That boy and his family are very excited and plan to continue with NorthStar Soccer in the Spring!)
- 40 kids participating in the After School Soccer program at Hemphill Elementary School.

Pictured at Right: The After School program provided Hemphill Elementary student Clarence (blue jersey in the fore front) the opportunity to try NorthStar Soccer and then to 'move up' to the U11 boys Club Team, all in his first season. In this picture he is still wearing his Hemphill jersey but strongly contributing in a late season Club Team match.



Spring 2021 After School Program Prospects

We anticipate growing the program at Hemphill to 60 or more players and adding the same number as we launch the program at West End Academy. The [Church at Brook Hills](#) is working in partnership to establish [NorthStar Soccer at Oliver Elementary](#). That's 3 afterschool sites forecast for the spring We therefore anticipate growing the program from 40 this past season to possibly 180 participants in the coming Spring.

Since launching the Hemphill program in 2018 we have held Saturday matches at Cornerstone Field in Woodlawn on the east side of the city. For the coming spring we are working to once again have a west side game field. This will make Saturday game participation a lot easier for families.

Involvement Opportunities

Maybe you are not a Birmingham Legion player or a Samford or BSC college student but you feel drawn to this program. NorthStar Soccer does have space for *you* to also give of yourself in support of this program. Please contact Paul Neville if you are interested in serving the After School program as: a coach/assistant coach, mentor or on site logistical support, communication/administrative support, Saturday referee or logistical support. We will welcome families volunteering together or high school soccer players wanting to give as little as a Saturday or two as a volunteer referee.

Ready to Volunteer? Questions? Contact Paul Neville at paul@northstarsoccerministries.org

2022 Program Goals—NorthStar Intramural Soccer League

About NorthStar Intramural League

The NorthStar Intramural League is our in-house program for teams from our NorthStar West and NorthStar East evening practice locations. The After-School program teams also participate in Saturday games in the NorthStar Intramural League.

Teams from our program partner, Holy Rosary Soccer, also participate in our league. We also have had guest teams from Pinson Parks & Rec as well as FC Birmingham.

The three primary age divisions are: 6U (preK and K), 8U (1st & 2nd grades), 10U (3rd & 4th grades). 5th grade players are sometimes included in 10U and sometimes placed in a separate 12U division. The ideal is to have enough players to be able to offer the 12U division for newer players and move those players on to Club Teams to compete regionally.



Above: Dad/coach with U8 players this fall.

NorthStar Intramural League Impact

- For 18 years NorthStar has been making an impact in the lives of kids from Tuggle and Princeton Elementary Schools on the West side.
- For 7 years NorthStar has been a partner with Cornerstone School. Together we are making an impact for those students and providing a program that is available to kids in public schools in Woodlawn and throughout the east side of Birmingham.
- For 3 years the NorthStar Intramural League has provided a suitable competitive environment for our after-school program teams.
- Through the NorthStar Intramural League program students across the city, both girls and boys, are encouraged to develop a healthy physical lifestyle and learn confidence-building skills within a warm, nurturing environment that includes coach-led devotionals.
- Some kids will move on from NorthStar Intramural to NorthStar Club teams — and beyond
- Leadership Development takes place with NorthStar teen players—Club and former club—serving as referees and skill coaches.

Pictured right: East v Hemphill U10 match (all Intramural League teams are coed), Fall 2021



Spring 2022 Program Plans

We are anticipating pretty strong growth in number of players/teams from the After-School program participating in NorthStar Intramural League (as described on page 5). We also are working toward modest growth for our East (Cornerstone Field) program site and major growth/re-building for our West program site. For our **East** location we were able to promote in school at Cornerstone Elementary in the Fall and we also got players from the nearby i3 Academy (Charter School also in the Woodlawn community). NorthStar Soccer originated on the **West** side next to Legion Field stadium but we struggled to get promotion done at our original core schools this past year. We anticipate that effort improving greatly for Spring 2021. We are working toward strong representation from Tuggle, Princeton, Washington and Glen Iris elementary schools on the west side for the evening practices.

Spring 2022 Involvement Opportunities

For coaching we will depend heavily on college student and parent volunteers. Junior League is a primary source for U6 coaches. **The evening Intramural program practices are a great opportunity for whole family involvement. Be a volunteer coach, bring your younger kids along to give them as players and your teenagers to help coach or referee!** We also have administrative and van driving opportunities.



JUNIOR LEAGUE
BIRMINGHAM



2022 Program Goals —NorthStar Club Teams

Club Teams for NorthStar begin at age U11. For us the term means teams playing in a league against other Clubs. Most of our teams play in the local recreational level league with a few teams playing at State League level.

Fall 2021 report

Officially we had 6 teams in this category in the Fall. But only 3 of those teams were fully rostered and we struggled to field all 6 on game days. We had a range of experiences for these teams. Some had strong 5-2-1 record). U15 girls competed successfully in State League but they were officially registered under Briarwood SC to facilitate sharing players. That was a good, creative solution to having only 12 players on that team. It worked well—most of the time. U13 girls were always borrowing from U12 girls. We placed U14 boys in the wrong division (too high) and struggled as a result, then two of the boys moved. U13 boys didn't have enough players without borrowing. U11 boys had enough players and did win 2 games.

Spring 2022 plans

For the coming spring we will focus primarily on building a strong U11/U12 program in both boys and girls divisions. We have prospects for developing 2 boys and 2 girls teams in this age division.

Many of our older players will move to playing for school teams in the spring. We will field one or two U13 or U14 teams depending on number of players available. We are looking for ways to support those players with skill sessions and staying connected to them by cheering them on at their school matches.

Fall 2022 plans

A strong U11/U12 Spring Club team program plus developing new players through the After-School and evening Intramural program sites will lead to a bigger pool for teams for the fall season. In addition, as we connect with our players on their school teams in the spring we anticipate bringing some of their teammates over for a great NorthStar Club experience in the Fall.

Club Team program Impact

- Skill building—Healthy self-esteem is not built in a child from glowing words with empty meaning, rather from skill instruction followed by encouragement for each step of mastery. This approach leads to a growth-mindset in youth which can be transferred to other areas of life.
- Team work lessons—learning how to work with a team is a critical and highly valuable experience for our youth. The team competition environment also presents the opportunity to learn to focus on what you can control and to avoid emotional entanglement around what you cannot. All of this leads to strong, practical work skills for our youth.
- Ethical development—team sport does not *automatically* teach ethical behavior (in fact, without intentional focus it can teach the opposite). At NorthStar we are committed to taking the opportunity present in the team sport situation to mold a positive, biblically based ethical approach to teammates, opponents and others.
- Spiritual Impact—Coaches have the opportunity to use devotionals and to mentor through relationships through multiple seasons of connections.
- Leadership Development—We seek to provide opportunities for our youth to learn leadership through: team captain opportunities, Intramural league referee opportunities, Junior Assistant Coaching



Club Team Involvement Opportunities

- Head Coach opportunities for qualified volunteers — a stipend is provided as available for coaches with soccer background, coaching training & experience
- Mentors & Assistant Coaches are needed and soccer experience is not required
- Drivers and administrative support is a big need.
- Team Sponsors—get your company logo on a set of NorthStar jerseys and connect with a team of players.

Right: NorthStar U12 girls Club Team—after their final match in a local tournament in which they fought hard to come out with a 0-0 tie. Sounds boring? It was one of the most tense and dramatic match ups you could imagine and a lot of fun to watch. Wish they could have pulled out the win but . . . Overall it was a very successful season for these girls and there is a lot of momentum to build on with this age group for the coming year.

Besides being a tremendous amount of fun, this team is an almost perfect mix: racial diversity, economic status diversity. They are also diverse in how they got to the team, girls coming from West side/Cornerstone/East Side/Holy Rosary .





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Club Registrar: Michelle Chambers

Intern: Matt Dale

www.northstarsoccerministries.org

NORTHSTAR SOCCER MINISTRIES— HELPING YOUTH FIND THEIR DIRECTION

Year End Giving Decisions?

If you believe in the mission of NorthStar make a financial gift at this time. We could use it and we will make good use of it. Open up and read inside if you want to see how we will put your contribution to work.

Gifts of any size are helpful and welcome but are no substitute for the life changing impact of getting directly involved—life changing to them, yes, but to you too!

Pictured at right: NorthStar players at Birmingham Legion FC match in November right before taking the field to serve as ball kids. Your involvement helps produce more of these scenes.



Support NorthStar while you shop on amazon. Log on to smile. Amazon.com and selected NorthStar Soccer Ministries as your charity of choice. A portion of what you spend will come to NorthStar as a contribution!