



Northern Chautauqua Soccer Association
P.O. Box 331, Fredonia, NY 14063

Message to the Membership 2018-2019
Delivered 11/4/2019 by Jake Wilkins

Northern Chautauqua Soccer Association has, in the past year, experienced stresses, pressures but most of all successes over adversity.

As a board, we:

- Focused on operationalizing processes to streamline the work that we all do.
- We started to follow a resolution driven meeting process to improve transparency in our decision-making.
- We implemented new software (QuickBooks) to help us better coordinate and make our data more accessible to those who need it.

As an organization:

- We temporarily lost a home. But through leveraging relationships, we found a home for each of our programs. We were even able to offer the experience of playing on full-sized, turf fields to most of our competitive teams.
- We experienced administrative pressures involved in being active and responsible members of the Buffalo and Western New York Junior Soccer League. But, through the dedication of a very committed few, we have secured our place in the BWNYSJL and are recognized as a respectful and competitive member club.
- We struggled with a very disgruntled base in Concord Academy.
- We attempted to define our identity through rebranding and the use of new logos for both Concord FC and Concord academy. We listened to the concerns of our members and sought ways to deliver a program of value to the families we have the privilege to serve.
- Through this search to find ourselves, we even changed our uniforms around a bit. Man, was that an experience.
- We developed and launched an entire new division of NCSA, TOPSoccer.
- A group of members and coaches have been working to make the long-standing dream of a permanent home with facilities worthy of our cause a reality.

I want to take a few minutes to thank a few people who stand out in my mind in making all of this happen.

Next, my right hand, Chris Witkowski. While most understand that the administration of this club is "a lot of work", but few realize it like Chris does. He attended upwards of 50 meetings this past year... Believe me, he didn't let me forget it. He endured countless calls from me on my drive home from work. Sometimes, this was a daily occurrence. His constant drive to improve and to make things more efficient and transparent, was the catalyst for many of the successes that we have experienced. He has been a sounding board for me and many over the past few years. As cliché as it may sound, we wouldn't be here without him. The recognition of Chris' efforts extend beyond this club. New York State West Youth Soccer Association felt so strongly about his positive impact on not just our club but the ENTIRE soccer community, they have honored him with the distinction of Volunteer of the Year. Thank you, Chris.

I'm going to let Chris' report highlight the important people who helped us to secure home fields for Travel. I want to thank Brett Gould, PJ Gondek and Jerry Fisk the Athletic Director at SUNY Fredonia for helping us to find space at the college to hold our Concord Academy program this past summer.



I want to thank the Concord Academy Committee who dedicated hours upon hours helping us to call parents, set teams, build fields, tear down fields, coach teams and do everything that it takes to put on a program.

- Stacey Gorka who worked as a coordinator most nights wearing the blue shirt so that parents, families and children knew who to go to for help.
- To Matt and Becky Walker, and their 3 kids (this truly is a family lead and run organization) who helped us to sort and prepare the uniform order for distribution.
- Thank you to Kris Schlia and Matt Walker for being there to help us get fields set in 4 different locations: Holy Trinity, Pangolin Park, the Dunkirk Modified field and at SUNY Fredonia.
- I need to thank, also, Joel Biscaro from North County Landscaping for the use of his time, truck and trailer to get fields setup and torn down. Dan Beckley from APG was a huge help in getting most of our equipment stored this past season.
- Aaron Pietro, I love watching you and Heather work and plot fields. The math and geometry that goes in to setting up fields is so intricate and precise... I don't know how you do it, but you make it look like its nothing. Aaron, is a huge part of our Futsal program working with our partners at the City Rec. Department and managing everything from coaching to coordinating. This program is successful because of your efforts, thank you.

The uniforms. Oh, the uniforms. Cristina and Brett are truly some unsung heroes of NCSA. I don't know if everyone realizes what goes in to dressing our kids like these two do. From meeting to discuss options for our patterns, to meeting with vendors, to placing orders they worked hand in hand. When it got ugly and we were receiving notices that our players uniforms "might" make it from Haiti by 8pm the night before first games, they arranged their time to sort and distribute uniforms to coaches and players. Nothing short of a series of miracles had to happen to get our teams dressed before each season and these two did it. Brett and Cristina, you two are amazing.

For many years, NCSA has recognized a gap in our programming and what seemed like a far-fetched dream came a reality this past spring and summer with the beginning of our TOPSoccer program. TOPSoccer is focused on individuals with special needs. It is intended to allow individuals to participate in soccer to their ability. Betsy set the wheels moving in our minds. Scott Craig from NYS West helped to educate us on how to make it happen and Phill Cook came in and ran with it. From a small Jamboree in March to a full-fledged program in August, TOPSoccer is up and running with another session already taking registrations set to start the first week of December. Phill like Chris has been recognized by NYS West for his impact on the greater soccer community and has been named the TOPSoccer Coach of the Year, 2019. Thank you, Phill.

I need to thank Chris, Brett, Mark, Aaron and Paul for their time and efforts to get our Land Acquisition Committee up and moving. Mark has really owned this process by rendering plans, hosting meetings with the Fair and the City of Dunkirk Planning Boards. He's had us in the room with a councilman, the County Executive and various others. Aaron and his brother completed a survey of the portion of the Fair Grounds that we will propose for our permanent home. We look forward to meeting with the Village of Fredonia, SUNY Fredonia, The Board of Ed. for both Fredonia and Dunkirk among others as our dream becomes a reality.

Debbie Dispense has been a long-time member of the club managing the finances of the Travel Committee. She's recently assumed responsibility for the entire club as interim treasurer. She has



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been instrumental in the migration to QuickBooks Online. And most recently began work with myself, Chris Witkowski and intern, Simon Brydges to develop a budget for NCSA.

Lastly, Thank you, to my wife, Jenn. Without your support and understanding, I do not see how I could have been an effective member, let alone president. You aren't a sideline wife, you're an "in the trenches get your hands dirty kind of woman". Thank you, Jenn.

I could stand here all night and talk about how each of you have done this or that and I probably would leave someone out or forget something that each of you have done. I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to you for all that each of you do. You, the members and administrators of this club are what make it what it is, a great club. I look forward to another year of service, working alongside each of you to make it better, and welcoming new members to enhance our program.

Thank you.