



Middleville AYSO hosting new Area “VIP” Program for aspiring soccer players with disabilities

Middleville – April 21, 2011 – Contact Dustin Ruth, (269) 736-3000
dustin_ruth@middlevilleayso.org; website: www.middlevilleayso.org

Middleville’s AYSO Region 277 announces the launch of a new VIP program this Spring to create opportunities for aspiring soccer players ages 4 to 19 who want to learn and enjoy playing who live in **SE Kent County, NW Barry County, and NE Allegan County**. AYSO Region 277 is collaborating with nearby AYSO Regions 675 (**Caledonia, Dutton**), 609 (**Wayland**), and 1196 (**Hastings**) to bring the VIP format to this area.

We are meeting Saturdays in April and May this year running a trial program at Middleville AYSO soccer fields behind the Thornapple Kellogg Middle School. We have players and buddies signed up to participate in activities for 5 weeks this Spring. We are looking for more kids to participate. We offer the opportunity for potential players to try the program for free. Interested players can try the program one time without a commitment. If players are interested in participating in more than one week of games this spring the registration costs is only \$15. If you are interested in trying the program this year please contact Dustin Ruth at (269) 736-3000 or dustin_ruth@middlevilleayso.org.

Register for Fall 2011 and Spring 2012. Registration for next season will take place at each regions specified registration times. We will be registering for the Fall and Spring seasons. There will be six games in the fall of 2011 and 6 games in the spring of 2012. Registration will cost \$25 for the whole fall and spring season and will include Insurance, Uniform, Magazine & More! Our goal is to have between 20-30 kids participate in next year’s program. This will allow us to divide the kids by skill level to make sure everyone can fully participate.

Regional registrations are as follows:

Middleville AYSO, Region 227 – May 7th 10:00-2:00 at Middleville Middle School

Wayland AYSO, Region 609 – May 13th 6:00-8:00 at Windsor Woods Community Center and May 14th 10:00-1:00 at Wayland Middle School Cafeteria

Caledonia AYSO, Region 675 – May 21st 9:30-1:30 at Duncan Lake Middle School Cafeteria

Hastings AYSO – April 30th and May 21st 9:00-1:00 at the Hastings Community Center

Volunteers and “Buddies” Needed. AYSO is a volunteer-run organization. Coaches, referees and administrators are volunteers. AYSO’s volunteer foundation ensures that it’s all about what’s good for kids. It also makes AYSO very affordable. AYSO has developed special training that helps parents who may have little or no soccer experience quickly gain the age-appropriate knowledge and skills they need to be effective coaches and referees. It also has unique administrative and management training. **We need volunteers from all four area programs. We need volunteer head and assistant coaches, organizers and buddies.** If you are interested in volunteering please contact Dustin Ruth at (269) 736-3000 or dustin_ruth@middlevilleayso.org.

AYSO VIP Program Ensures Everyone Plays® - The AYSO Very Important Players (VIP) Program provides a quality soccer experience for children and adults whose physical or mental disabilities make it difficult to successfully participate on mainstream teams. VIP teams may include players who have disabilities such as:

- Blind or visually impaired
- Amputees or with conditions that impair mobility
- Mentally or emotionally challenged
- Autism
- Down syndrome
- Cerebral Palsy

Watch a short video about the VIP Program on YouTube: <http://aysosection3.org/vip.html>.

AYSO's VIP Program has touched many lives, including Chuck, Jamie and Lucy Meyer. After learning of a nearby AYSO Region, the Meyers were curious if AYSO had any programs for children with special needs. Jamie, Lucy's mother, visited the AYSO website and discovered VIP. A few weeks later, Lucy – who has Cerebral Palsy – was participating in the Region’s VIP Program and was having an amazing experience. “She loves the socialization and being part of a group of people where she feels totally involved and not just an observer,” said Jamie. “This is her first real experience with team sports and keeping score – which is invaluable for a child to experience - and because of VIP, Lucy is able to learn important lessons. I wish this soccer league was all year long!” “I think that it is great that the coaches and high school students who assist have found the right balance between

support and encouragement without coddling,” said Lucy’s father Chuck. “It was good to see Lucy actually break a sweat during the game!”

VIP Goals - These players are Very Important Players in AYSO. We recognize that all people need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance. The VIP Program offers that acceptance and carries our philosophy of Everyone Plays® to new heights - giving everyone a chance to play

Youth with special needs are estimated to make up approximately 10% of the school-aged population and approximately 20% of the United States population is identified as having some type of disability. Special schools and programs can be isolating, so the VIP Program has been structured to integrate our players into the rest of AYSO by providing a soccer season, and in our case, using "buddies" - able bodied helpers - to assist players who need assistance, both on and off the field. Our goals for every participating player are:

- Have fun playing soccer
- Understand the fundamentals of the game
- Learn teamwork and fair play
- Increase positive self-esteem
- Become more physically fit
- Meet and be comfortable with new people

Everyone Plays® - VIP helps more than just the players. Buddies and other volunteers increase their appreciation and understanding of individuals with special needs. They find their lives greatly enriched by their involvement with their new VIP friends. For parents thinking they would never see their children playing a sport or making new friends, VIP gives them joy and hope. They are able to relax and enjoy watching their children having fun like other kids, perhaps for the first time.

Teams can have as few as three players and may be co-ed. VIP teams can be put together with players who register based on mobility or ability. Older and younger players can also be separated onto different teams when numbers allow.

The program is designed to be flexible and creative. Players will be drawn from the neighboring Regions to form an Area-wide program. Ensuring the success of players and volunteers in VIP is a priority, the VIP program operates within the existing structure of an AYSO Region/Area to ensure that volunteers and players have the full support of AYSO and all its resources.

AYSO's Six Philosophies - AYSO's philosophies are living tenets that separate it from other sports organizations. They are Everyone Plays®, Balanced Teams, Open Registration, Positive Coaching, Good Sportsmanship and Player Development.

Everyone Plays® - Our program's goal is for kids to play soccer so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least 50% of every game. It's no fun to spend the game on the bench...and that's no way to learn soccer!

Balanced Teams - Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible because it's more fun and a better learning experience when teams of similar ability play. It allows for each player to gain the experience of a wide variety of teammates of different skill levels.

Open Registration - Our program is open to all children between 4 and 19 years of age who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing. There are no elimination try-outs and nobody gets cut.

Positive Coaching - Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment for the players and leads to better-skilled and better-motivated players. A coach can be one of the most influential people in a child's life, so AYSO requires they create a positive experience for every boy and girl.

Good Sportsmanship - We strive to create a positive environment based on mutual respect rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our program is designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

Player Development - We believe that all players should be able to develop their soccer skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities, both individually and as members of a team, in order to maximize their enjoyment of the game.

For more information, contact Region 277 VIP Program Coordinator Dustin Ruth, 269-736-3000 or dustin_ruth@middlevilleayso.org. The Region's website is www.middlevilleayso.org.