Date: 3/20/2024
To: Board of Directors, West Virginia Soccer
From: Aaron Wood, VP Adult Soccer
Subject: Update on Adult Soccer in West Virginia

Introduction:
I am pleased to present this report on the current status of adult soccer in West Virginia, along with proposed strategies for increasing awareness and participation in the sport. Additionally, I will discuss the upcoming Werner Fricker Playoff and the vital role of the USL team WV United in promoting adult soccer in our state.  I would first like to take this opportunity to thank Len Rogers for his years of service to WVSA.

As you step away from your role as President of West Virginia Soccer after an incredible 24-year run, I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for your dedication, passion, and tireless efforts in leading our organization.

Your impact on West Virginia Soccer has been monumental, from bringing the regionals to our state and fostering economic development to overseeing the transition to a staff-driven association. Under your leadership, West Virginia Soccer has flourished and grown, becoming a respected voice both nationally and within the US Youth Soccer and US Adult Soccer communities.

Your unwavering support for adult soccer development has not gone unnoticed, and your encouragement has played a significant role in the growth and success of the sport in our state. Your vision, leadership, and commitment have inspired countless individuals and left an indelible mark on West Virginia Soccer.

As you move on to new endeavors, please know that your legacy will continue to inspire us all. Thank you, Len, for your years of service, dedication, and passion for West Virginia Soccer. You will be deeply missed, but your impact will be felt for years to come.

With heartfelt appreciation you will be missed.

Current Events:
- The first-ever Werner Fricker Playoff between the North and South leagues is scheduled for April 5th at 5pm at Shawnee Sports Complex. The champion will advance to play Christos FC in Maryland on April 14th.
- The Southern West Virginia Adult League, based in Charleston and Huntington, has rebounded to ten teams, and efforts are underway to encourage college club teams to join the league. The 2023/24 we may see a turnaround in registration numbers.

Registration Trends:
- The total registrations for adult soccer in West Virginia have seen a decline over the past few years:
  - 2021/2022: 545 registrations
  - 2022/2023: 482 registrations
  - 2023/2024: 161 registrations (current fall SWVASL registration only)
- This decline mirrors the national trend, and it poses a risk of de-affiliation with USASA by the US Soccer if registration numbers continue to drop.  If this happens the States may have to register adults directly with US soccer.  I worry not having a national organization to help promote our adult sport will continue to have a negative impact on registration in the coming years.

Strategic Plan:
To address the decline in registrations and increase awareness of adult soccer in West Virginia, I propose the following strategies for the 2024/25 seasonal year:
1. \*\*Annual Awards: \*\* Introduce awards such as Adult Player of the Year, Adult Manager of the Year, and Adult Soccer Referee of the Year to recognize individuals contributing to the growth of adult soccer.
2. \*\*New Awards:\*\* Develop three additional awards to incentivize and acknowledge individuals who are actively supporting the development of adult soccer in the state.
3. \*\*Youth Club Collaboration:\*\* Encourage youth soccer clubs to support adult soccer by promoting it among their members and helping to build back the leagues.
4. \*\*Promotional Events:\*\* Organize events like an Adult Beer Fest Soccer Tournament in the summer of 2025 to attract new participants and generate excitement about the sport.
5. \*\*Partnership with WV United:\*\* Continue to collaborate with WV United, the USL team, to showcase and promote adult soccer in West Virginia.

Importance of USL:
Having a semi-professional team like WV United is crucial for the growth of soccer in West Virginia. It provides a platform for aspiring players to showcase their talent and inspires youth players to pursue soccer at a higher level.  We are excited that WVFC has purchased the team and going to be doing great things with the team in the coming year.

Importance of Youth Club Collaboration:
1. \*\*Role Models:\*\* Adult soccer players serve as role models for youth players, inspiring them to continue playing and improving their skills.
2. \*\*Volunteer Coaches:\*\* Adults involved in the adult soccer program can volunteer as coaches for youth teams, providing valuable expertise and guidance.
3. \*\*Field Maintenance:\*\* Adult soccer programs often contribute to field maintenance and facility upgrades, benefiting both youth and adult players.
4. \*\*Community Support:\*\* A strong adult soccer program can attract community support, leading to increased resources and opportunities for youth soccer leagues.
5. \*\*Player Pathways:\*\* Youth players have clear pathways to continue playing soccer as they grow older, transitioning into adult leagues and maintaining their passion for the sport.
6. \*\*Cross-Generational Interaction:\*\* Interactions between youth and adult players foster a sense of community and camaraderie, creating a supportive environment for all players.
7. \*\*Increased Participation:\*\* Parents who participate in adult soccer programs may encourage their children to join youth leagues, leading to higher participation rates overall.
8. \*\*Shared Resources:\*\* Youth and adult soccer leagues can share resources such as fields, equipment, and administrative support, maximizing efficiency and reducing costs.
9. \*\*Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle:\*\* Adults engaged in soccer promote a healthy and active lifestyle, setting a positive example for youth players and encouraging them to stay physically active.
10. \*\*Sponsorship Opportunities:\*\* A strong adult soccer program can attract sponsors, providing financial support that benefits both youth and adult leagues through improved facilities, equipment, and programs.

Conclusion:
In conclusion, it is imperative to address the decline in adult soccer registrations in West Virginia and take proactive measures to revitalize the sport. By implementing the proposed strategies and leveraging partnerships with organizations like WV United, we can work towards reinvigorating adult soccer in our state.  That you to the state staff that supports our leagues and the work you do for us in the office everyday!  Your work does not go unnoticed and is appreciated.

Respectfully submitted,

Aaron Wood
VP Adult Soccer
West Virginia Soccer