

# CONNECTED

YOUTH FOR CHRIST of Northern Ohio - Newsletter

*Connecting Teens To Jesus Christ And His Church*

November 2023



## Coach | Steve Pausch

I have been called many things over the years and like you, I wear many hats throughout the week. My two favorite things to be called are Dad and Coach. There are only a select few who can call me Dad and I consider myself very blessed to have amazing children. The number of those who call me Coach is a much larger number. I have coached high school sports for over 20 years now. When I added up the numbers, I have coached over 830 young people over those years, not just in a respective sport, but in life too. Coaching gives an opportunity **daily** to speak into the life of a young person, sharing words of encouragement and instruction, celebrating the grand accomplishments of a sport and working through the disappointment that also comes with sports. Dugouts, golf courses, sidelines and bus rides offer unique opportunities to discuss the issues that come up in the life of a teen.

I make it a priority to take the teens whom I coach out to dinner. Through the course of the season, I take two by two out for a dinner to talk further about life and eternity. I send a note home that explains what we will be discussing and asking permission to talk about issues of faith and family. No parent has ever denied this dinner meeting to talk with their child. Sports create such an open format to talk about how God granted gifts to each person and how we often mess up that relationship. The terminology of sports helps drive that point home. We make an **error** in baseball or **strike out**. We **get** called for a **penalty** or commit a foul. All of these terms help deliver the point about sin and separation.

Recently, I have been called Coach several times by people who are no longer a teen

but much older even into their 30's. In conversations around town when running into them, I have been called Coach and even introduced to their children as Coach. I expected to always be called Dad by my children and am honored to be their Dad, but I wasn't sure what the statute of limitations was on being called Coach.

We recently just finished up the high school golf season, and for me, it was another amazing opportunity to get to know some new young people, grow deeper with some from last year and get to know some new families and parents. If I was to be judged on my record as a golf coach, there would not be much to talk about, but 5 young people who had never stepped on a golf course before June got amazingly better and one of our returning golfers almost made it to the State tournament. But, all of the team call me Coach, and I hope that will continue well into adulthood. Thank you for making it possible for us to be involved in the lives of young people every day through this ministry.

## **Unique Opportunity | Matt Mountjoy**

I have written in the past about the many reasons why I coach. Among them are opportunities to build positive relationships with young men and mentor them, an inroad to getting kids to come be a part of the ministry and hear about Jesus, and also the fact that I love football and competing. What a great combination to do something I'm passionate about and use it in ministry! Well, this past week provided another unique opportunity to share the Gospel, as I was asked to lead our team's chapel service before the game.

While many of the kids know that vocationally I do ministry, and we have a handful of guys that attend The Garage weekly on Wednesday nights, I really have only had the opportunity to formally share about Christ with 10 to 12 of our over 70 current players. Leading chapel was an opportunity I was excited to take up. Yet as many times as I have shared the gospel with hundreds of teens over the years, I felt the weight of being able to reach this new group of kids and very much appreciated all of the prayers that covered the event!

Our head coach at Wadsworth is a believer, and he has provided the opportunity over the years for players to attend a 15 minute chapel service before each game. Every week, a different local youth pastor comes in and shares. This particular chapel service, however, was unique. We were playing out of state in Maryland, and some traveled the

night before and stayed in a hotel. Since we are a public school, the chapel is a completely voluntary service that's provided for any of our players that would like to take advantage of it. Normally we have around 20 or so guys that attend weekly and it takes place immediately before the first pre-game team meeting. On a normal week, these meetings are in the school and there are plenty of places for guys to hang out and wait for the meeting if they choose not to attend chapel. At the hotel, really the only place to congregate was the one meeting room. As this was the case, it seemed like pretty much the ENTIRE TEAM made the choice to attend the service as well as the entire coaching staff. In total, there were about 70 students and 16 adults in the meeting room!

Without giving a detailed outline of the entire service, I'll share with you my goals of the service that I started with. These are the three things that I have become convinced should be accomplished in a football chapel: Share the Gospel, Don't Commit Heresy, and Connect Football to the Bible. While they may seem obvious, I've seen the second one fail at times (normally in attempt to do the 3<sup>rd</sup>). Meanwhile, sometimes in trying to do the 3<sup>rd</sup> the sharing of the Gospel becomes convoluted with far reaching sports metaphors. So, I opted to skip the chance of that and before tying the Bible into sport spent the first half of the talk just sharing the straight up unfiltered Gospel. I have hope that it was the catalyst to having more opportunities to share and maybe some new guys will come to The Garage. But even if that doesn't come to pass, God created the chance to share the Good News with many people, and I am grateful to have been a part of it!

## **Lime Green Dreams | Laurie Beal**

We own a lime green 1978 Volkswagen bus that we named Shaggy. We bought it about 12 years ago in Colorado. That almost makes it sound like it's a traveling van, but it only made it to Ohio because we towed it

on a trailer. We dreamed of taking it to our favorite relaxation place, Presque Isle, Pennsylvania but after getting to know it, we realized that probably was not a smart idea.

We have had many mechanics over the years try to get it in enough working order to trust it to make even a 10 mile jaunt, successfully. Instead, we've gotten to know the tow truck driver better. In the spring, we were able to find a guy that finally figured out the problem. He was the same guy who had fixed a problem we had with it, initially... with an aluminum can?! I'm not really sure how to fully explain what has been the main problem with it all



these years, but basically a part had slipped out of place and was stuck in the engine and it had kept throwing a "wrench into the system."


Even though Larry, the super mechanic, said it was good to go distances now, we were cautiously expectant about the possibility of a trip to Pennsylvania. We took it on many shorter trips and built up to the big trip that earned a Presque Isle sticker slapped on the back window.

I shared this story with our teen parents one night when our group started out with a lot of negativity and talk of dreams that had slipped away. It opened a big conversation about goals and what keeps us from them and how even lofty goals, like getting a VW bus to make a 300 mile roundtrip, can be achieved. It may take smaller steps instead of one giant step. It may take more time. It may look different than they had hoped, but their goals would for sure NOT happen if they gave up.

It was so cool to hear these young moms and a young dad talk about goals they USED TO have and, then, as we talked longer, get a renewed excitement about even the possibility of these dreams maybe becoming their reality! All of us mentors began helping each of the young people unpack the dreams they had tucked away. As we started encouraging them to think outside of the box and of ways they could STILL make these things happen, the others in group took over and started excitedly cheering each other on. Then, as they heard themselves speak truth to each other, you could see them start believing it for themselves.

Within a half an hour, one gal was determined to get her GED, 4 young people had a plan of how they were going to save enough for apartments, one spoke of college, 2 were planning to finish high school, and they all talked about many different ways and examples of how their kiddos were going to have different and better lives than they have had. There was a peace that God would give them the strength to achieve these goals. We also reminded them of multiple things that they have all ALREADY accomplished.

We know we'll have to keep the encouragement going and that life will throw "wrenches" in their path, but we are excited to see their goals be raised a few notches. Please pray for them as they try to walk with God in the lead towards their dreams!

 <p><b>YOUTH FOR CHRIST</b> P.O. Box 323 Wadsworth, OH 44282 330-273-5794 <a href="http://www.northernohioyfc.com">www.northernohioyfc.com</a></p>	<p>Steve Pausch Executive Director</p>	<p><b>Local Ministry Directors:</b></p>	<p><b>Board Members:</b></p>
	<p>Laurie Beal Director of Ministry- Wadsworth</p> <p>Barb Pfeiffer Office Manager</p>	<p>Scott Hulet Herb Miller Matt Mountjoy Roger Seward Stacey Stender</p>	<p>John Heese Barbara Moran- Engler Eric Pfeiffer Bobby Puls Kathy Stehno</p>

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