

# East Hills coach mentors kids on soccer, life

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There are no set teams.

No standings.

No trophies.

Instead, children in the East Hills Recreation soccer program for fun, camaraderie and the chance to improve their skills. And it's all under the guidance of Scott Zimmerman, who organizes the indoor soccer league that runs from November through March.

"We've done away with the standings and the fixed teams probably about five or six years ago," Zimmerman said.

"Basically, after a few weeks of practice games, I kind of can gauge the level of play. And depending on who shows up on a Friday night – because it's always been a Friday night – I then set up the teams as they come in. It doesn't take me long.

"We have different caliber teams, so, one week, you could be on a very good team. The next week you could be on not such a good team. It kind of levels the playing field out."

Zimmerman admits, at first, some participants were disappointed when they learned the league would not have awards.

But, over the past few years, the concept has grown on children who come from several local school districts, including Richland, Conemaugh Township, Greater Johnstown, Chestnut Ridge, North Star, Westmont, Forest Hills and Bishop McCort.

"What they found out is the kids then don't have the pressure," Zimmerman said.

"I harp on them all the time about I want a lot of goals, I want a lot of creativity. And, along with that, goes mistakes, which can happen here because there's nobody from the sidelines that's going to be screaming at you that you did the wrong thing. It's really developed the players."

Running the league is one of the many ways Zimmerman helps children.

He coaches travel league and high school varsity soccer teams.

Zimmerman also offers his time to Young Life Johnstown, a nondenominational Christian organization that tries to help children, including by putting them in the presence of positive adult role models.

"The idea is that there are a lot of kids that probably would never step foot in a church," Zimmerman said. "The idea is to get kids to know about the lord, who would never go to church. So it's the kids who are un-churched.



*Scott Zimmerman watches the action during East Hills Recreation Center's youth soccer program on Friday, March 4, 2016. Photo by Thomas Slusser/The Tribune-Democrat*

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“But it’s not an in-your-face thing at all. It’s to build that trust with them, to have that conversation with them.”

Zimmerman further discussed the importance of volunteering by saying, “There are a lot of bad examples, bad examples of people that they may follow. If you can be a bit of a positive in that, it really means a lot to me. It’s about spending quality time with them.”

He added: “I’ve met a lot of kids, and I hear a lot of bad things about how this generation is lost or in trouble. My experience has been there are a lot of really, really good kids out there who grow up to be great adults. They just need a little bit of encouragement, mentoring, somebody to talk to. I think more of that can change a lot.”

Zimmerman is a Richland resident who works in cybersecurity for Concurrent Technologies Corp. He plays bass in the Oakland United Methodist Church contemporary Christian praise band.