

**October 24, 2025**

Hello RTSA Soccer Community,

### **President Intentions for 2026**

After thoughtful deliberation, I have decided not to seek a 4<sup>th</sup> term as RTSA President. I have bittersweet emotions regarding this decision as I have been volunteering in RTSA since 2016. I see this as milestone in my life as my sons get older (too fast!) - my son Jack aged out of Travel in June of 2023 (An RTSA alum since the age of 5 who I am proud to say is playing Varsity left or right wing as a junior in Mt. Lakes), and my son Christian will age out of Travel in June of 2026 ( An RTSA player since the age of 4 who is starting center mid for his middle school team). Increasing career demands and a shift of family and personal priorities make this move necessary for me. It is time for new Board members to take the reins with renewed passion, energy, and ideas to take the RTSA Soccer program further into the future!

I started in RTSA in 2016 as an assistant Pals coach for my son Christian. I then went on to coach 15 Rec teams between my two sons (phew!), and then I became a parent manager for 1.5 years for the 2009 Boys Travel Team. Finally, I joined the Board as RTSA President on January 1, 2023. I will continue to help the U14 2012 Boys Travel team through June, and I will be available as a consultant for the 2026 Board (if they need me!) I have developed so many valuable friendships through this experience and I had the privilege to coach dozens of kids. Although at times it has been very demanding, there is nothing like seeing the Rockaway kids out on the field having fun playing soccer – the sport of the world (sorry football)!

If you are not already volunteering as a coach, a board member, and/or team boosters rep, please consider joining the team who makes the program run for our kids. *You don't need to be a soccer ace to help!*

### **RTSA Board Members**

I would like to thank ALL the RTSA coaches and Board members who have worked hard to keep the Rockaway soccer program parent-run, affordable, strong, and growing in our community (720+ players in the Fall 2025 Season between Rec, RVSL, and Travel!!– that's a lot of cleats!). I particularly want to thank those Board members who have remained on the Board since “our” election in December of 2022 through the organizing of the Fall 2025 season – **Juliano Adriano de Oliveira** (Director of Coaching), **Michael Kaine** (RVSL Director), **Justin Reall** (Field Ops Director/Travel Director), **Keith Ryan** (Registrar) and last

but not least **David Sproul** (Rec Director/VP). I am happy to report that we have enthusiastic 2025 Board members who have great ideas on how to take the Soccer program beyond where it is today – **Chris Heasman** (Rec Director/Interim Travel Director), **Pedro Hernandez** (Head Referee), **Danielle Latham** (Director of Soccer Ops), **Sean McCloskey** (Webmaster), **Heather Murmer** (Secretary), **Marco Monge** (Uniform Chair), **John Pierce** (Treasurer), **Jason Stavrenos** (Director of Field Ops.), and our newest Board member **Eric Tosches** (Webmaster Social Media). I would also like to thank **Amanda Cady** (Boosters Director) and the Soccer Boosters team for their work raising funds for the RTSA Scholarship Program, organizing picture days, can shakes and the annual Halloween event, spirit wear development/sales, as well as other activities.

### **RTSA Partners**

I would also like to thank the RTSA partners who I have worked closely with during my time as President: Besmir Zuta, Pete Krowiak and all the trainers from Live the Game, Rockaway Township Recreation Department (Dave Dyer, Susan Gaeb), Morgan Morris who leads the crew that takes care of all of our fields, Mayor Joe Jackson, the Rockaway Township Town Council, Morris Hills High School, MCYSA and NJYS Leadership, corporate representatives from Dick's Sporting Goods, Deirdre from Jame Lynch CPA, Debbie Rodriguez who helps with our accounting, Ray and Rolando from Christ Church, Chrissy from Elaine's Team Wear, Castle Printing, representatives from SportsConnect, and other Rockaway sports programs that we collaborate with for field usage, especially Mike Petro from RT football. Apologies to anyone that I left out. *It takes a lot of people to make the RTSA soccer program work!*

### **RTSA is very important to our community**

RTSA was founded in 1973. I joined as President in 2023 when the last Board President communicated that if they did not have volunteers to join the Board, the program would have to be handed over to a for-profit club organization. Why there are some advantages to having a Club run a town's program, I feel it was important to have a parent-run soccer program with parents serving as board members and coaches to keep it affordable and to help connect parents with their kids and the community. There are horror stories of clubs taking over town programs to the detriment of the players.

When I was in second grade in Nutley, NJ, my best friend on my street, and I decided that we wanted to play soccer. I talked my father into being our coach. Although my dad had been an athlete when he was younger, he never played soccer. He recruited my older sister's high school boyfriend and his friends from Kearny soccer (those who know, know) to coach us second graders! My dad learned how to coach soccer from them and went on

to coach me for 9 years. When he was dying from cancer in 2010, I sat with him, and we fondly reminisced about all our soccer teams and gigs (I was in his band as a kid) – NOT his job. I still get messages from “kids” he coached 40 years ago saying how he was a positive influence on their lives. I am saying all this to remind everyone that we all can make a similar impact by volunteering, and *we need to keep this parent-run program alive for the kids of Rockaway for another 52 years! Please consider volunteering today!*

### **2026 RTSA Board Elections**

The current Board members are in the process of organizing who will remain on the Board and what positions they wish to hold in 2026, however, there will surely be multiple open positions.

Please reach out to me if you have any questions or if you know for sure that that you would like to be considered for the RTSA Board in 2026 ([johnrichardoakes@gmail.com](mailto:johnrichardoakes@gmail.com)).

The nominations will be announced at our next **RTSA General Meeting on Monday, November 3, 2025, at 7 PM** at the Municipal Courtroom. The election will be at the same location on **Monday, December 8, 2025, at 7 PM**.

It has been a pleasure to serve as the RTSA President for the past 3 years and I wish you and your families health and happiness in the future!

***Go Rockaway!***

*Sincerely,*

John Oakes  
RTSA President