



American Youth Soccer Organization

**NATIONAL
ANNUAL
GENERAL
MEETING**

May 24th -27th, 2024
Denver, CO



CANDIDATE ANSWERS TO NOMINATING COMMITTEE QUESTIONS

AMERICAN YOUTH SOCCER ORGANIZATION
NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2024 QUESTIONS FOR NBOD CANDIDATES

The National Board Of Directors candidates were asked to respond to a set of eight questions. They were notified that their responses would be distributed to all Executive Members who are eligible to vote at the 2024 AYSO National Annual General Meeting (NAGM.) The candidates' statements and responses to these questions are listed on the following pages. Please review them carefully in preparation for your vote in the upcoming election at the 2024 AYSO NAGM in Denver, CO.

The questions posed to National Board of Director candidates for the candidate statement were as follows:

- 1. What characteristics do you possess that would make you a great board member?**
- 2. What qualifications and skill sets do you possess that would improve the current board makeup?**
- 3. How do you rest and rejuvenate to stay motivated?**
- 4. From your perspective, and in order of importance, what are the most important things the NBOD should do?**
- 5. Describe a (creative) way in which you have handled interpersonal conflicts or disagreements?**
- 6. The Board is more strategic than operational, which is very different from all other EM positions. What experience do you have with planning strategy and what would be one of your strategic goals?**
- 7. How would you ensure that the Vision, Mission, and Philosophies are put first in all decisions and program implementations?**
- 8. How do you plan to stay in touch with game day volunteers as a board member?**

2024 National Board of Director Candidates:



Christina
BENTLEY



Ruben
GONZALEZ



Daniel
HAAK



Denis
MCCARTHY



Rich
PAGLIARI



Doug
RYAN



Penney
WAKEFIELD

Please Note: The following responses from the candidates have been inserted as submitted by the candidate. No other alterations or edits were made.

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NBOD QUESTION 1

What characteristics do you possess that would make you a great board member?



Christina BENTLEY:

I strive to have a self-awareness that allows me to be approachable, patient, and curious. I can listen with compassion and the intention to understand. I am open-minded and non-judgmental. I know that perspectives and experiences are valid. I am thoughtful and intentional in my interactions and engagement with people.



Ruben GONZALEZ:

As a NBOD member I have always listened to each idea and proposals presented to the Board. Allowing for all parties to present their different views and beliefs. I am always open to criticism and advice. My levelheaded demeanor, not to judge quickly, and to keep an open mind. Having been a grass roots volunteer, allowed me to embrace the purpose of AYSO and function of the National Board of Directors.



Daniel HAAK:

I am someone who strives to get things done and communicate as clearly and unbiasedly as possible. I believe in AYSO as an organization and am passionate about our "all volunteer" culture that makes us such a unique and successful organization. While I have my opinions, and I believe in them, I always keep an open mind to differing views and believe in mutual respect and conversations to find any solutions. I look for solutions that work for everyone, not just for me and what I experience, I believe that will be a tremendous strength as a board member.



Denis MCCARTHY:

I have 20 years of financial management and board room experience. As a public accountant my role in auditing required quarterly presentations to Boards regarding financial health of fortune 500 companies. In addition I have served on the local AYSO Region 281 board for 10 years, the AYSO Area 2C board for 3 years and as the Club Administrator of AYSO United Region 7015 for 6 years.



Rich PAGLIARI:

I have been a AYSO volunteer for 42 years and have been a RC, AD, and am currently Section 10 Director. I believe with my background I can work with the board to come up with ideas and solutions that can help AYSO grow and still remember that we need to keep the Region in mind so we don't make it harder for them.

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Doug RYAN:

- Accountability – doing what you say you will do. For me, when I was asked to become Treasurer, I had a couple of objectives that would make it easier for member programs to do business with us. This was the start of the review of more modern ways to operate and included the financial digital transformation and the finance policy. While the road here was not completely smooth, the end result is that we are using some mainstream products that have helped streamline AYSO programs in numerous ways.
 - Integrity – exhibiting moral and ethical behavior and values. As the Treasurer, focusing on being a good steward of the organizations funds and working to ensure that we were transparent in our reporting. We are in a better financial position now than ever before. For years, we had been spending our reserves and operating in the red. Since assuming the Treasurer role from Michael when he became President, we have maintained our ability to remain operating in the black. Our investment into Program Implementation is being monitored to ensure that our return on that investment is on track. As this continues to achieve success, it will provide us additional financial resources and a solid return on investment.
 - Dedication – Committed to the program and strive to sustain AYSO for decades to come. For me, looking at the varied market demands based on the desires of today’s parents and support new ways to grow the number of players in the soccer community as a whole. We realize that one size does not fit all and AYSO must be flexible and nimble to adapt to those desires. This is how we will grow AYSO and sustain our future.
 - Collaborative – ability to focus on win/win solutions. An example would be when the Section Directors and I worked to define what were discretionary versus operation expenditures. The result was a more consistent process resulting in a more positive relationship between the membership and the AYSO Office.
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Penney WAKEFIELD:

The characteristics I possess that I believe would make me a great board member are; honesty, integrity, perseverance, passion, commitment, open mindedness, energetic, and stewardship. I believe that a good balance of characteristics helps me contribute to the board in a positive way. I finish any task that I start to the best of my ability. I have a passion for this organization and for the hundreds of thousands of kids that it represents that leads me to being the best steward that I can be for AYSO. Being part of a board that has 11 members, it is important to be open minded and actively listen to the thoughts and ideas of others because collaboration of ideas leads to what is best for the whole organization

NBOD QUESTION 2

What qualifications and skill sets do you possess that would improve the current board makeup?



Christina BENTLEY:

A key qualification that I have is that I understand how people and organizations work. I have educational and professional experience in human resources, human behavior, organizational development, communications, instructional design and training, and adult development. With a human-centered approach, I have decades of experience and success in effecting change within organizations and people.

I can balance stakeholders and have experience in proactively shaping and influencing stakeholder expectations. With the ability to make ethical decisions on a mixture of analysis, wisdom, and experience I can apply diverse experiences, styles, backgrounds, and perspectives to arrive at decisions based on the best interest of the organization and its stakeholders.

I am a creative and innovative problem-solver who enjoys collaborating with others around a common goal.



Ruben GONZALEZ:

My first term serving on the National Board allowed me really to see and learn the importance of the NBOD and their efforts to make AYSO the worlds bests youth soccer club. The make-up of the National Board of Directors is now diverse and should continue to be that way.

My experience as a Parent, Coach, Regional Commissioner, Area Director allows me to use my true-life experiences that I have met on and off the pitch. From volunteers, coaches, parents, and players, I have honed my critical thinking skills to diffuse most situations, where all parties involved are winners.



Daniel HAAK:

I view my success at recruiting and retaining volunteers as a huge part of my success in my Section role, I believe strongly in identifying the right volunteers for the right roles, not just someone to fill a need. Keeping an open mind and having productive relationships across the board is something I think would also ensure my success in NBOD. While I am a referee by trade, I have a background in coaching up to the 14U level, I want to foster a relationship between referees and coached to create a positive culture that can be built on.



Denis MCCARTHY:

I bring a unique perspective having worked closely with US Club, USYS, AYSO and now have been taking licensing courses in UEFA. I have managed a US Club member club as a director of coaching and assisted the Davis Region with admittance in a US Club playing circuit. I have a fairly broad view of the youth soccer landscape and things that AYSO can participate in to improve that landscape and change the experiences that Youth players have in the Sport.

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Rich PAGLIARI:

With my AYSO and work knowledge I can bring negotiating and problem-solving skills to the board that could help our program be more successful and strategic.



Doug RYAN:

- Project Management - ability to work with a team to provide deliverables on time. For example, when we started on our digital transformation journey a few years ago, the goal was to establish a path to easier operations for the volunteers. This led to the policy change and implementation of credit card use. The Bill.com Divvy Card has allowed programs to more easily access their funds, reduced the need for time spent on issuing reimbursement checks to volunteers that had to use their own money, while providing for enhanced financial controls and visibility.
 - Negotiation Skills - by recognizing the common areas of agreement and focusing on root causes for disagreement to work towards an acceptable outcome.
 - Sales - being able to communicate on a relatable level with factual information. This was particularly useful when creating the presentation regarding the needed increase in the National Player Fee. Two years ago the Finance Committee evaluated the impacts on some of our escalating costs and came to the unfortunate realization that an increase in the National Player Fee was necessary. While nobody was overjoyed by this, we put together a communication package that detailed the projected impacts for the next three membership years to be presented in webinars and at EXPOS. These open dialogues with question and answer sessions to our membership at all levels, helped to make this unpopular but necessary decision easier for our executive members to make, allowing this motion to pass with over 80% voting in favor. The result is a more financially healthy AYSO while we continue to work on containing and reducing costs.
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Penney WAKEFIELD:

I possess a few different qualifications and skill sets that will help continue to improve the board's make up. First of all, I am an educator and I have qualifications in the areas of instruction, planning, and curriculum development. I have worked and will continue to work to improve instruction for our volunteers. I have excellent planning, communication, and organizational skills. These are all integral to helping various board activities run smoothly. The ability to plan ahead and prepare for all contingencies is important to avoiding missteps. Communication is key in any organization and the ability to communicate clearly both through writing and verbally is vital to an organization's health and viability.

NBOD QUESTION 3

How do you rest and rejuvenate to stay motivated?



Christina BENTLEY:

The most rejuvenating way to rest and renew is through interacting with my family, pets, and friends. When the opportunity presents itself, I love to travel and enjoy nature. When the day-to-day hustle of life makes that unrealistic, I find it essential to squeeze in small doses of relaxing and fun activities throughout the day and week. Some of my favorites include getting outside, jigsaw puzzles, reading (fiction and non-fiction), and playing the Nintendo Switch.



Ruben GONZALEZ:

Well, I have been playing guitar for 56 years and my outlet is creating music. Music is my therapy. I am still active in the local music scene in my hometown and playing on a band. When I play music, I regenerate and recharge myself to tackle real life. Along with my love for my daughter, son and 10-year-old granddaughter, and two Labradors, always keep me busy.



Daniel HAAK:

I spend time with my husband, two huskies, and my children (foster youth & adopted), and when I have enough time off we love to travel the world. With both my husband and I being flight attendants we have the world at our finger tips and we love to take weekend getaways and longer trips. Taking my dogs for walks and hikes is a favorite for me and, as I put it, "it just helps my soul."



Denis MCCARTHY:

Coaching is therapy for me, it is my favorite time of day and always leaves me in a great state of mind to take on the work day/work week. I also enjoy traveling typical with something active involved like hiking or skiing. I have the pleasure of now working in the functional medicine space which has spilled over into my lifestyle leaving me energetic and focused in both my work and personal life.



Rich PAGLIARI:

Physically, I am very active and walk a lot. I am highly motivated just seeing our AYSO programs being delivered and watching kids on the fields.

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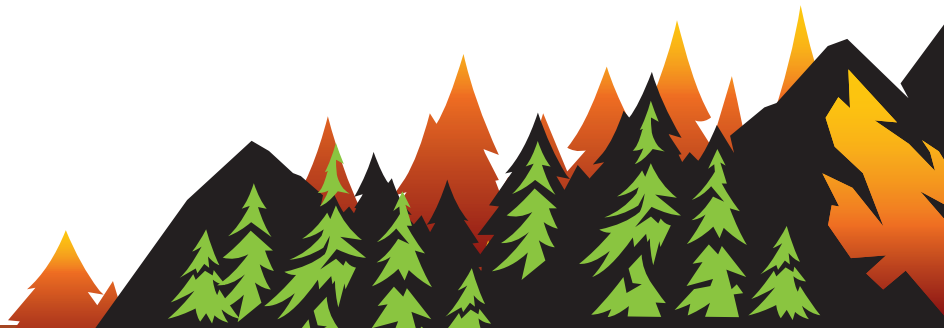
Doug RYAN:

- I enjoy officiating sports and have recently added volleyball on top of the 26 years of soccer.
 - Travelling to see new places and cultures.
 - Riding my dirt bikes.
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Penney WAKEFIELD:

I find that a good balance between work and recreation are vital to being a productive person. My “real job” can be quite stressful, so it is important to have down time for self care. I regularly take time to enjoy things like traveling with my husband, reading, and spending time with my family. Sometimes, my down time may only be a couple of hours in the evening at home, but it is still a break. It is important to hit the reset button in order to be the best and most productive person I can be!



NBOD QUESTION 4

From your perspective, and in order of importance, what are the most important things the NBOD should do?



Christina BENTLEY:

As a member of the NBOD, key tasks include assuring that we are meeting the requirements of duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience. This includes ensuring that the organization is operating under its Mission Vision, and Philosophies that serve as core, fundamental aspects of AYSO that make it a unique organization within the youth sports landscape.

As an organization, I believe one area of focus must be on better understanding our organizational capacity. While the organization has made definite progress towards improving some aspects of our organizational capacity (i.e., organizational infrastructure) there is still a lot of opportunity to further understand and improve all areas of our capacity. This is an effort that includes helping to align the organization to fortify the capabilities that are necessary for the organization to meet the needs of our existing participants and allow for growth. When considering organizational capacity, the aspect of human resources, specifically for AYSO, our volunteer base is a daunting undertaking. It is also one of the most limiting factors to getting the kiddos onto the fields for many regions. This limitation must be addressed to meet our organizational capacity.

While progress has been made in alignment and collaboration for initiatives, there is still an opportunity for improved efficiency, effectiveness, and cohesiveness. These efforts must begin with the decisions made by the NBOD and enacted through aligned efforts of the NBOD, Support Office, Sections, Areas, and Regions. This is only possible through bi-directional transparency, open communication, and collaboration.



Ruben GONZALEZ:

Listen. Be open. Be fair. Accept Criticism. Do not Judge. Respect All. Allow Fairness for all AYSO members and their families. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Stability, repeatability, and accountability.



Daniel HAAK:

1. Identify our organizational issues with volunteer retention
2. Tackle our organizational volunteer recruitment strategy and create best practices that can work in many different Regions, Areas, and Section environments.
3. Create a close and positive working relationship between the referee and coach councils
4. Ensure that communication channels are open and fostering genuine and open communication between board members

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Denis MCCARTHY:

Inspect how AYSO Soccer Programs have forged great community environments and how its legacy has created areas and communities where, without advertising, overwhelming amounts of players continue to show up and want to be involved and play. Use those examples to look to expand into areas where AYSO can have that same positive impact. The curriculum, structure and standards that have been laid out for coaches, referees and administrators in local regions is second to none and there are large portions of the soccer community at large (USYS, US Club, etc) where these items are not in place and the ultimate loser in those scenarios end up being the children.



Rich PAGLIARI:

Communicate with our Regions, Areas and Sections to see what is needed and then bring it back to the board to discuss. We should continually seek ways to develop and deliver our programs to more communities.



Doug RYAN:

- a) Focus on new methods and opportunities to get more kids playing soccer whether that is through our existing program model or by seeding start up programs in unserved and underserved areas. Our investments into the growth initiative are starting to show results and are on target to start producing positive revenue results.
 - b) Become the preferred entry point for anyone that wants to learn to play soccer. I believe there are opportunities for working collaboratively within the soccer ecosystem to deepen and solidify relationships with the Federation and State Associations. The primary goal is to increase the number of players and make soccer one of the top sports for participation in the USA. As an AYSO member of the Youth Council for US Soccer, I believe there is much we can do to grow the sport of soccer across the country and attract more players to AYSO.
 - c) Identify and develop strategies that will attract volunteers based on the motivations and time commitments of today's parents.
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Penney WAKEFIELD:

In my opinion, the most important thing the NBOD can do is to have a strategic plan to ensure that AYSO will have growth each year to ensure our viability in the future of the soccer landscape. The next thing, also very important, is to have policies and procedures to make sure to safeguard our players and volunteers. The push to reduce liability is also key to our viability. The third thing we need to do as a board is to work to make sure that our volunteers have all the support they need in order to continue to provide world class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives.

NBOD QUESTION 5

Describe a (creative) way in which you have handled interpersonal conflicts or disagreements?



Christina BENTLEY:

There are a few things I keep in mind when managing conflict or disagreements and I use them as my general guidelines. 1) Understand the desired or acceptable outcomes from the discussions. 2) Plan a specific time and place to discuss. 3) Create a space that has rules of engagement for the participants. This may include the need to remain quiet and respectful while someone else is explaining their view while ensuring them that they will also be provided the same courtesy. 4) Guide the participants in the process of acknowledging differences and identifying common ground.

As far as creativity, many times our real-time words are not the most appropriate when spoken. Sometimes, conflict resolution is best started with a writing exercise to work through certain emotions.



Ruben GONZALEZ:

My personal approach is to first Listen. Never assume or suggest that their views or concerns are wrong. Offer solutions, not demanding that they change their complaint, but to relook at it. Offer to hear from others involved on their concern. Suggest that all can be winners. Follow up with them after a solution has been reached. Often, parties just want to be heard and listened too.



Daniel HAAK:

I tend to try to handle most interpersonal conflicts by having a conversation and identifying what the root cause of the issue is and then working to solve that problem. If it is me that has the problem I tend to process my thoughts internally first, and then approach the person I have a conflict with, when it is someone that has a problem with me, I try to keep an open mind if/when they approach me, and if I know they have a problem but haven't approached me, I will try to find a way to approach them if it will be able to be a positive situation. I very much dislike leaving conflict unaddressed because I think it creates a rot that spreads. If I am having trouble managing a conflict myself, I will reach out to others for advice on how to potentially deal with a situation.



Denis MCCARTHY:

I learned about 13 years ago to separate work and problems from individuals. Work needs to get done and problems need to be solved. In those moments its easy to point fingers, place blame and feel poorly about the people you are working with or opposed to. I have chose to think again regarding my approach and ask whether or not i've created the issue and if not separate the issue or work to be done from the individuals involved. I find in most situations that resolves the personal conflict.

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Rich PAGLIARI:

First, I talk to the person(s) involved to learn what the problem is. I then let them know I will look into it and then get back with them with the results. Most importantly, I always get back to them.



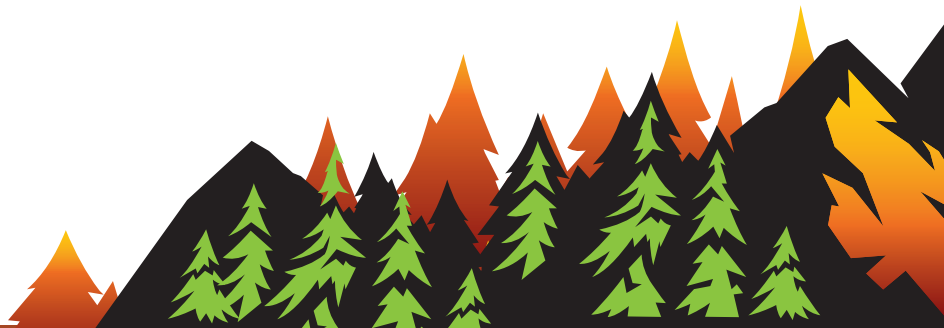
Doug RYAN:

Typically, I will use my professional sales and negotiation training to identify areas of agreement and those of disagreement. By focusing on what the areas of disagreement and the motivations surrounding them, often gets to a solution. When possible, addressing a negative situation in a positive manner and approaching it as an opportunity to improve, we are often able to achieve the mutual goals with a win/win outcome. For example, during the co-authoring of the Alliance program guidelines and subsequent review with the Section Directors, a concern arose about the potential diluting of the Extra programs already established in some Sections. By identifying that concern and collaborating on options, we were able to include verbiage that put Extra as a first option prior to forming an Alliance program. This resolution of conflict, the program has grown even in Sections with an Extra program and now serves over 2500 players promoting the player development pathway.



Penney WAKEFIELD:

As a general rule, when I am faced with interpersonal conflicts and/or disagreements, I approach the person to work out the issue in order to move forward. I do not believe rumors or “he said/she said” types of gossip. I think that people are going to disagree, it is the nature of humans. I personally talk out the problem and try to look at it from the other person’s perspective in order to try to come up with a solution or just decide to respectfully “agree to disagree”. Often, conflicts and disagreements are the result of a misunderstanding and the ability to communicate openly and honestly with an open mind will often resolve the matter. When it comes to decisions that the board must make where people disagree, it is important to look at the issue at hand and make a decision that is best for the entirety of the organization. My personal opinion does not take precedence over the good of the whole.



NBOD QUESTION 6

The Board is more strategic than operational, which is very different from all other EM positions. What experience do you have with planning strategy and what would be one of your strategic goals?



Christina BENTLEY:

Within my professional career, I participated in strategic development spanning 1-year, 5-year, 10-year, and 20-year projections that aligned strategic goals across a multi-level organization to address existing market opportunities, compliance and liability requirements, and new market development. The strategic goals were developed and cascaded throughout the organization to drive the business unit, team, and individual performance goals.

As mentioned previously, I am extremely concerned about one of the most precious resources our organization has, our volunteers. This organizational capacity of human resources is necessary for our organization to provide soccer for the kiddos in our communities. With that being said, I would promote a strategic effort to increase the visibility of the volunteer story. As an organization, we should be investing time and resources into understanding our volunteers and securing pathways that enable us to improve the volunteer lifecycle within the organization. These efforts must transcend through the various levels of the organization in a collaboration that will enable the regions to see results at the grassroots level.



Ruben GONZALEZ:

My career of 40 plus years in the Aerospace industry is all about strategic planning and executing a sound plan. One of my strategic goals would be to develop the tools and training for the new volunteers of AYSO, so they want to return each season. This would ensure the growth of AYSO for the future.



Daniel HAAK:

- I have significant experience with strategy and I consider that to be a huge part of my successes in my current, and past, roles. I believe in the long game, and sustainable solutions, and I understand that those take time. In my past roles I have worked diligently to increase referee instructor populations in particular, which is a critical role to have trained referees for each match. We also identified issues with instructors in remote Regions and Areas, and with that known we started working to find a solution for those needs, one of which is virtual instruction.
- One of my strategic goals for the board would be how to modify our volunteer training to a work for a more remote group of people, who have less time to volunteer than in the past. How to do this, while also ensuring compliance with state and federal laws, as well as AYSO policies is going to be a challenge, but I believe it's something that needs to be addressed with creativity since it is a barrier for volunteers to work with us.

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Denis MCCARTHY:

Ultimately I think the strategy of the AYSO board has two critical components. Expand the reach of AYSO and ensure that the programming involved achieves the ultimate goal of enriching children's lives. One of the most important things a board can do is ensure the right people are in the roles to achieve the organizations goals. In that context putting the right people in the roles of evaluating the programming, curriculum and administrative processes to make sure they stay current, relatable and effective and putting the right people in the role of reaching out to the soccer communities that aren't receiving the same quality and seeking to help them improve whether its through AYSO immediately or over time, by being a good steward of the game.



Rich PAGLIARI:

With my background as a Service manager for a Lincoln Dealership I had to work with the public, technicians, salesman and the owner to keep all happy and to come up with ideas to bring more people in for service. I am an idea person. I do my research and work with others to achieve goals.



Doug RYAN:

Over the last seven years in the NBOD, I have focused on strategies to improve and modernize our program while emphasizing what "success" would look like. In concert with the National Executive Director who is tasked with holding the office team accountable, we are all aligned to the same goals and outcomes.

- My strategic goals would be to:
 - Continue to focus on expanding our player base into new markets and becoming the primary entry point for youth that want to learn to play soccer.
 - Enhance the use of the tools we invested in, such as MOJO, SOCI, and SAVAGE, designed to support our legacy product to attract and retain players.
 - Ensure that AYSO remains solvent for the next 60 plus years.
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Penney WAKEFIELD:

Having been on the NBOD for almost three years, I have had experience with strategic planning that we have done as a board. As a former chair and now liaison of the National Management & Systems Council, we often look at planning strategically for needs that will arise in the future in the area of Management courses, Systems implementation or changes, and needs to help make volunteers' jobs easier. In my "real job", I have to look ahead four years into the future when planning my curriculum because I teach English to four grade levels. This can take creativity, forecasting, and sometimes a little bit of a "crystal ball" in order to try to determine where things will be in the future.

As far as a strategic goal for the NBOD, I would have to look at a player growth goal of 20% over the next four years. With the amount of exposure that this country will have to soccer in the next 2-3 years, we need to capitalize on that "high" and get kids who are excited about soccer on the field wearing an AYSO jersey.

NBOD QUESTION 7

How would you ensure that the Vision, Mission, and Philosophies are put first in all decisions and program implementations?



Christina BENTLEY:

I believe that through holding a position on the NBOD, a primary role is to hold my NBOD leadership, peers, and myself accountable for the responsibility that we have to our stakeholders to ensure that the Vision, Mission, and Philosophies are upheld throughout the discussions, decisions, and implementations that we move forward with. To ensure this alignment, rigorous and open discussions must be held, and various perspectives considered when addressing topics. As a board, we must be comfortable with questioning each other and being questioned by others.



Ruben GONZALEZ:

My 35 years with AYSO as a Regional Board Member, Coach, Regional Commissioner and Area Director, has taught me that the core values of AYSO are paramount in supporting a sound program. To this I would support all decisions that will improve and be beneficial to AYSO



Daniel HAAK:

Our vision, mission, and philosophies are the core of AYSO and who we are as an organization, I always keep each thing top of mind when making any decisions and I intend to do the same in the board. I am not one to shy away from bringing up items that I think are forgotten or unaddressed, and I would absolutely do that if any of these three things were not being taken into account. I firmly believe that we are a youth development organization who uses soccer as a tool to facilitate growth of any youth participant; our vision, mission, and philosophies support that, and it's why I will ensure to always have that as a topic of conversation in anything I do.



Denis MCCARTHY:

Quite simply there is no better Vision in the Soccer world than "provide world class programs that enrich children's lives" People often mistake this to mean that the players need to be world class. That is not the point, the program should be and I believe on paper they are and I think the board should think strategically in how to ensure that continues to happen in each place that the AYSO name is used. That doesn't mean getting operationally involved but continuously examining whether or not the organizational structure is allowing that to happen. In today's environment we have work to do in ensuring the programs promote a fun and family environment. Issues are going to arise and again we need to make sure the organization is set up to deal with and correct those issues in a manner that preserves our member Regions while strengthening them. This is always top of mind because I believe that the vision and mission are spot on. The AYSO philosophies are again top of mind for me at all times. The areas I see for improvement are understanding how these can be relayed and lives through all levels of youth soccer. I believe that there are sentiments within the philosophies that would benefit the highest levels of youth soccer and provide better experiences. In our core regions investment in trainers and training I see as a place to ensure those regions understand the philosophies and can make it a part of their daily habit to ensure they are carried out on the field.

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Rich PAGLIARI:

I always remember that we are here for the kids that is what I have done for all the years that I have been part of AYSO and will always remember that. It is the basis of every decision I have made.



Doug RYAN:

- By continuing to stay relevant in today's soccer ecosystem by expanding the outreach to as many communities as possible, we will continue to provide world class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives. This is paramount to the continued long term success of AYSO and truly supports our mission of developing and delivering quality youth soccer programs which promote a fun, family environment based on our philosophies which apply to our everyday management of people and decisions and the NBOD as a team. Our PLAY event in Atlanta at last year's NAGM, was a huge success and is starting to lead to positive outcomes for more options and can lead into Region growing the S/A/R structure and I was pleased to be a part of it.
 - By involving each NBOD and SD member in what we do, allows each of us to utilize our skills and become better developed as players and ensures that everyone plays. For example, the construction of an AYSO Finance Policy to align with the new digital tools and processes, involved the Finance Team, other NBOD members, the Legal Commission, the Section Directors, and some of their trusted advisors. By orchestrating the various levels of AYSO management, we were able to put forward and receive approval. Until now, we have never had a single document that covered the AYSO financial management for all levels of the organization including the AYSO Office.
 - Partnering like skillsets together on task forces and councils balances the team. As the liaison to the Referee Council, it has been recognized that we should engage the leaders of all our councils to share information and efforts helping us align with all aspects of our program. There was an initial call scheduled by the Referee Council in April to discuss how best to move forward with a number of items that impact coaches and Region management.
 - Providing support and feedback on the efforts of these teams incorporates positive coaching. By challenging the finance team to look at additional cost savings and processes has resulted in clean audits for two years in a row. We also had our auditors conduct a review of our internal processes and no deficiencies were found.
 - I believe that every decision we make, is a team decision. Whether we win as a team or lose as a team, it is what can make us stronger and more unified in everything we do as a Board.
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Penney WAKEFIELD:

In my opinion, every decision that we make as a board must be kids first. If we stop and think about how our policies, procedures, initiatives, and strategic plans will affect getting kids on a field playing soccer, we will be implementing our mission, vision, and philosophies. If we aren't thinking about the kids, families, and fun, then what are we doing here?

NBOD QUESTION 8

How do you plan to stay in touch with game day volunteers as a board member?



Christina BENTLEY:

On a personal level, my family is actively involved in our local Region. My youngest daughter is a 12U player in the Core program. My husband and two of my adult children are involved as region volunteers - coaches, referees, and board members. I anticipate that I will be at my local fields in the years to come. From a professional perspective, I have a definite passion to know and understand our volunteers, their efforts, and their experiences. I value the opportunity to connect with the volunteers of the community programs. I would like to enable the voices of the volunteers to communicate to reach all levels of the organization so that we can better serve the organization. The identification and implementation of various methods for soliciting information that will help us to leverage the positives and remediate the negatives.



Ruben GONZALEZ:

I have served on the Nation Board of Directors for three years, and I still register as a volunteer in my home county. I have assisted in training within Area 10W. As my 10-year-old granddaughter will be playing AYSO, I plan on coaching and or refereeing for her team.



Daniel HAAK:

Being a referee volunteer, I always look forward to refereeing our soccer games anywhere in the country, as well as at various tournaments. I am also very passionate about instructing in referee courses, and I plan to continue to do that going forward at Expo's, Camp's, and Region/Area/Section's across the country. Staying in touch with our volunteers with make sure that the conversations and issues that we deal with at the board level are relevant to who we work for (the volunteers) and being out there as often as possible, at all levels, is critical to our success as a board.



Denis MCCARTHY:

I am active in our local area and region and I also volunteer as a coach and referee. At the area level Alliance Program we are implementing mentoring programs to help coaches, players and referees grow.

Please Note: The following responses from the candidates have been inserted as submitted by the candidate. No other alterations or edits were made.



Rich PAGLIARI:

I will be texting, emailing and calling and I will go to the Region when I can. I have continued to stay in touch with the Areas and Regions in my Section. I will continue to do so.



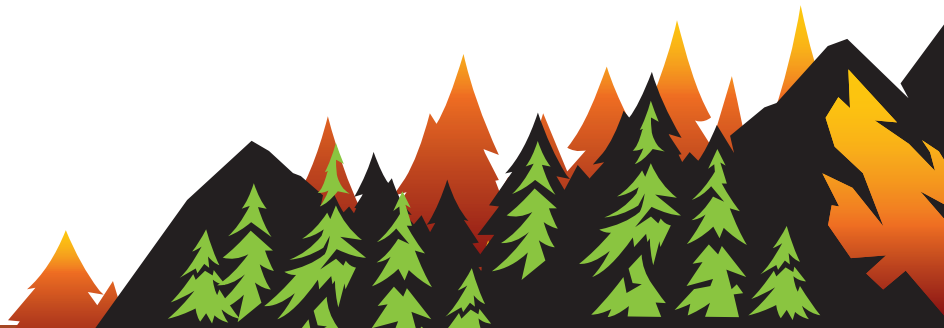
Doug RYAN:

- While I no longer have a Region near my home, my efforts to stay connected will not change and I continue to referee at regions within my Area. I strive to visit with our membership while attending and instructing at Expos, refereeing at the last 7 National Games, Tournaments, and at our NAGM. At events, I will regularly sit and have meals with people I don't know and learn about them and their programs. This has been invaluable in ensuring that we recognize that one size does not fit all and helps obtain feedback on how we can make the program better and what is working well.
 - Having regular in person meetings with the Section Directors to do the business of the organization is also paramount to our ability to invoke modifications and enhancements to the program based on their feedback. Collectively, we developed the list that defines operational versus discretionary expenses to eliminate the inconsistencies. In addition, we were able to work together to reestablish funding to use for their operational needs and support of their Areas.
 - If re-elected, and cooperatively with the Section Directors, I would like to start offering quarterly "town hall" meetings for geographic groups of Areas and Regions. This will allow access by the local program operators direct to the Board to stay connected to what is relevant with today's soccer programming and the differing needs across the country.
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Penney WAKEFIELD:

I continue to be very active in my home Section. I am an instructor at expos, road shows, and work with Areas and Regions to do any training they may need in between these things. I am active on BAND and communicate with volunteers at all levels. I still communicate with volunteers from my home Area and Region by answering questions they have and helping when I can. I even get out and try to visit AYSO regions on a Saturday now and again to see the beautiful game in action!



2024 QUESTIONS TO CANDIDATES FOR NATIONAL PRESIDENT

The National President candidate was asked to respond to a set of five questions. They were notified that their responses would be distributed to all Executive Members who are eligible to vote at the 2024 AYSO National Annual General Meeting (NAGM). The candidate's biography, statement and responses to these questions are listed on the following pages. Please review them carefully in preparation for your vote in the upcoming election at the 2024 AYSO NAGM in Denver, CO.

The questions posed to National President candidate for the candidate statement were as follows:

- 1. How would you define youth sports industry trends that are impacting our organization?**
- 2. How would you be able to make the significant time commitment needed for this role?**
- 3. Do you believe that AYSO is currently moving in the right direction? If not, what would you change? If so, how would you enhance our progress?**
- 4. What are the two biggest factors impacting AYSO and how would you address them?**
- 5. What are the two biggest internal factors impacting AYSO and how would you address them?**

2024 National President Candidates:



Doug
RYAN



Gary
VAN OTTEN

Please Note: The following responses from the candidates have been inserted as submitted by the candidate. No other alterations or edits were made.

Please Note: *The following responses from the candidates have been inserted as submitted by the candidate. The text has been formatted to fit this document. No other alterations or edits were made.*

PRESIDENT QUESTION 1

How would you define youth sports industry trends that are impacting our organization?



Doug RYAN:

The youth sports landscape has seen increased pressures from additional government regulations at the Federal and State levels. Everything from fingerprinting to automated external defibrillators (AED's) and the required training. This has put additional burdens on the program operators and has caused some parents to choose less physically demanding sports for their child. The soccer providers are now competing for the same players in a smaller pool. The best way to overcome this is to increase the size of the pool of players by launching into unserved or underserved markets. Referees, both paid and volunteer, did not return after the pandemic or have aged out causing a shortage that leaves many games without officials or with only one. The efforts to venture into new communities can also foster an increase in potential volunteers. By investing in these areas of growth, while preserving our legacy, will be the best way to sustain AYSO for another 60 years.



Gary VAN OTTEN:

The primary youth sports industry trends that in the current and near future will affect AYSO are: 1) the interest and involvement of government in the youth sports arena (both legislative and financial); 2) the increased presence of private equity in youth sports; 3) an increased recognition by government, industry leaders, and parents of the impact of sports on the "whole" child (emotional, social, and physical health); 4) a continued focus on IT tools (communication/analytic/scheduling aps); 5) an increased recognition of, and action to address, the lack of youth sports access in disadvantaged communities. Some of these trends either do play, or should play, positively into the strengths of our organization. A couple of these trends can play into AYSO positively, or negatively, depending on how well we recognize and address them.

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PRESIDENT QUESTION 2

How would you be able to make the significant time commitment needed for this role?



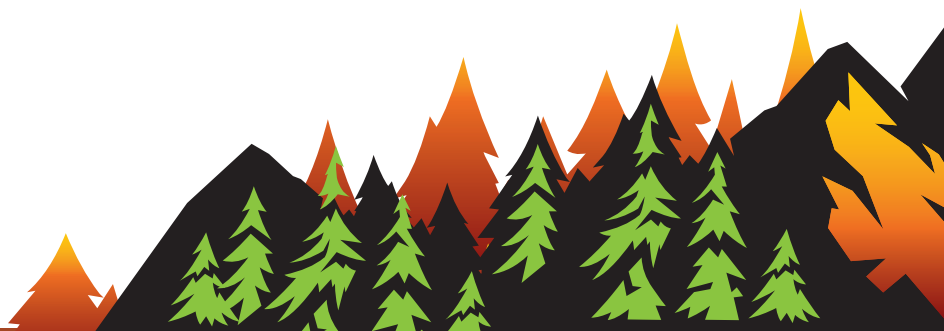
Doug RYAN:

I have been an NBOD member for the last seven years and have missed only one Board meeting and facilitated or participated in developing the finance policy, co-authored the Alliance program, have been the Board liaison to the Referee Council, participated in a numerous of EXPOS across the country for several years, been engaged in the US Soccer Youth Council, all while maintaining a full time job as a Regional Sales Manager. I see no reason that my availability and dedication to AYSO would be affected.



Gary VAN OTTEN:

I "retired" several years ago when my wife, Nancy, and I sold the company we owned. At that time I increased my commitment to AYSO, beyond coaching and refereeing, to include successive jobs as ARA, SCA, chairman of the National Coach Council, National Board of Directors, and now running for the office of President. I will continue as an active coach and referee, but can and will commit the personal time and resources needed to be an effective leader of our organization. All the same, I believe that leadership does not mean personally taking on as many tasks and responsibilities as possible. Leadership means providing the support, counsel, integrity, compassion, and authenticity that empowers and encourages everyone to participate and contribute.



PRESIDENT QUESTION 3

Do you believe that AYSO is currently moving in the right direction? If not, what would you change? If so, how would you enhance our progress?



Doug RYAN:

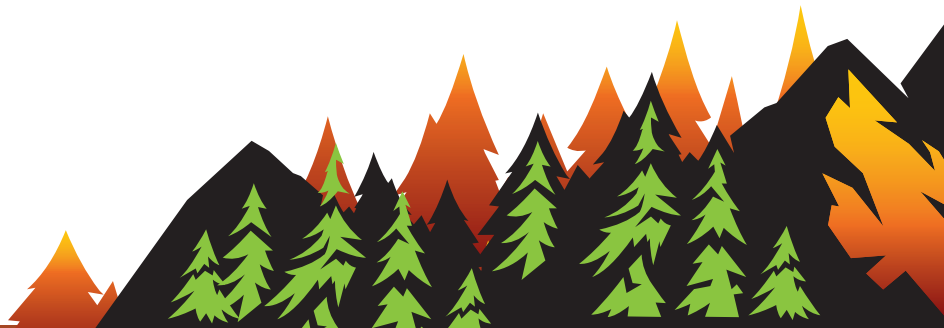
- I completely support the investment AYSO has made into expanding our reach to unserved/underserved markets. Launching new programs has started to increase our player population and helped our Sections and Areas with resources to relaunch Regions that have gone dormant. Historically, participant numbers had been declining by at least 3% each year for over a decade. Section and Area staffs needed to focus their attentions on maintaining the programs they have, leaving very little time to spend on developing new Regions.
- Due to the membership's efforts during the pandemic, AYSO came out of it better than most and we have experienced a rapid return to pre-pandemic player count numbers. The return to play efforts coupled with mindful spending, strategic hiring, and cost containment wherever possible, we were able to utilize some of our retained earnings to invest in personnel hires to focus on starting up new programs. Whether they look like a typical Region or a camp, schoolyard, playground or other program that gets kids kicking a soccer ball, these are the seeds being planted that can grow into a Region and this effort will be the quickest way to increase participation in soccer for players of all ages.
- I intend to continue these efforts and strive to strengthen the relationship between these programs and our existing S/A/R structure. I want to ensure that the efforts made by the program implementation teams look at the specific market demands and evaluate the best option to utilize our full menu of program options. It is also my intention to facilitate some method to improve the visibility and transparency of these efforts.
- Last, I want to re-ignite the volunteer engagement group in order for us to identify the motivations of today's parents and how we can increase our volunteer membership. This would be coupled with sharing the findings with the membership and developing new methods to capitalize on what we find from the results; how we make decisions that impact the whole organization; to improve how we communicate across the organization; to raise the level of respect for different ideas, backgrounds, positions, and needs - in short, to be more collaborative and cooperative while serving AYSO and the kids entrusted to us.

Please Note: The following responses from the candidates have been inserted as submitted by the candidate. No other alterations or edits were made.



Gary VAN OTTEN:

I believe that on the whole AYSO is moving in the right direction. Michael Karon and the NBOD did a very good job of putting our organization back on sound financial footing. As President I will continue to focus on fiscal responsibility, while encouraging investment in programs and tools that improve the experience for our players, families, and volunteers. I am encouraged by a return to an emphasis on improving the AYSO offering on the pitch, and will continue to support and emphasize efforts in this area. We have made a good start in establishing a proactive engagement program from our member relations staff to our Regions. I support that effort and will encourage active feedback that results in identifying areas for improvement, as well as areas of "best practices" that can be shared across our organization. We must revamp and improve the marketing and communications efforts that define AYSO, to our own membership and to the those deciding what sport, and in what organization, their children will participate. New office hires support that effort, but the effort itself must be defined, implemented and assessed. We should continue to support efforts to bring soccer to underserved communities, concentrating our efforts where AYSO has a minimal presence, or where we have adjacent Regions who can help support new efforts. There are early steps underway with the national Councils to begin breaking down some of the silos that exist in AYSO. This is an area where we need to do better across the whole organization - to improve relationships between different parts of the organization; to improve how we make decisions that impact the whole organization; to improve how we communicate across the organization; to raise the level of respect for different ideas, backgrounds, positions, and needs - in short, to be more collaborative and cooperative while serving AYSO and the kids entrusted to us.



PRESIDENT QUESTION 4

What are the two biggest internal factors impacting AYSO and how would you address them?



Doug RYAN:

- First, as we hear year after year, communication. While there is not a “magical” solution, I do recognize that certain topics have a specific audience. For example, we have a number of newsletters like Whistle Stop for the Referees, Coaches Corner for the coaches, and the Insider for Executive Members and all are effective for their particular groups. However, one group we should be highly focused on connecting with, are the parents of the participants. One viable solution would be MOJO app that connects Coaches and Regions with their parents and players. This will be one of the pivotal tools for the Pitch Plan that the Couch Council is developing.
 - The second area would be in regards to sponsorships. While we have been making strides here but, we are receiving more contributions than sponsor partnerships. There needs to be a deeper dive into why we are not achieving the desired results and what we can do to increase this area of revenue. A major, long term, uniform sponsorship of a premier partner that everyone is proud to display is most desirable.
-



Gary VAN OTTEN:

The biggest internal factor impacting AYSO is an underlying current of distrust between different parts of the organization. This adversely impacts collaboration and cooperation on both decision making and on implementation of decisions made. The will and the knowledge to do what is best for the organization, its members, its volunteers, and most importantly, its kids, exists throughout AYSO. As president one of the most important things I can, and will, do is to foster open communication, open deliberation, and open opportunity across all of AYSO while holding everyone, but especially myself, accountable for modeling that style of leadership.

The second big internal factor impacting AYSO is the many silos that exist in our organization - NBOD, office, coaches, referees, management, systems, EMs, Sections, Areas, Regions. All of these pieces of the organization do a good job of serving their immediate constituency, but all of these pieces have a tendency to forget that they are part of a larger community, the nation-wide soccer club that we all belong to, the American Youth Soccer Organization. As president I will continually work to break down the barriers, traditions, and perceptions that fuel what keeps us separate, and which get in the way of the common vision, mission and philosophies that should have us pulling together. As one part of this effort I will work to involve more cross-functional, cross-geographical, and cross-hierarchical groups in the strategic and decision-making processes of the organization.

Please Note: The following responses from the candidates have been inserted as submitted by the candidate. No other alterations or edits were made.

PRESIDENT QUESTION 5

How would you manage making an unpopular but necessary decision?



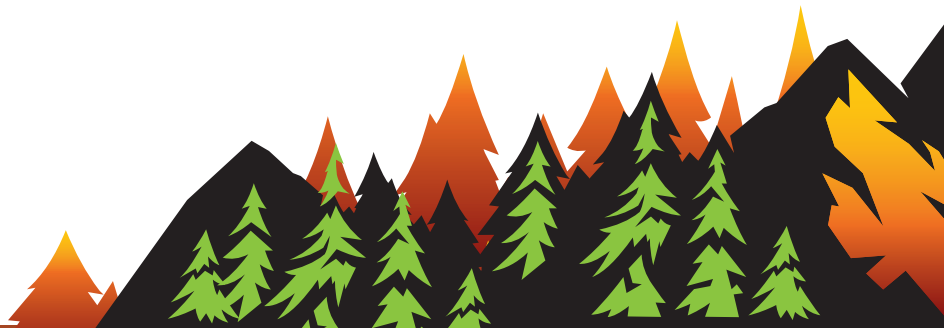
Doug RYAN:

I believe that frequent communication and transparency help tremendously. There are times when situations require decisions that will not always be pleasing. I recall the time during the pandemic when we were forced to take a really hard look at our expenses. The realization that we needed to furlough employees was necessary. The tough decisions came down to being able to define what our minimum needs were to facilitate the fundamental operations of the organization. Developing the list of those that were going to be furloughed was not easy but, was necessary if we wanted to survive as an organization. The result is that we are able to hire strategically and keep our operational expenses in line with revenue and be good fiduciaries.



Gary VAN OTTEN:

The President of AYSO serves at the pleasure of, and in service to, all of the AYSO membership. Decisions made on behalf of the organization, popular or unpopular, should be made by vote of the body tasked with that responsibility. With the National Executive Director and the Executive Members having decision making responsibility for the day-to-day running of the organization, a decision made by the President, except for breaking a tie vote on the NBOD, should be infrequent. However, if the situation arises where a decision by the President is necessary, I believe the key is that the decision-making process is the same, whether the decision is popular or unpopular, and that it involves input from all affected parties, a full and open discussion within the decision-making authority, full disclosure regarding the deliberation and reasoning behind the decision, and implementation done with respect for the opposing point(s) of view. As President I would do my best to not make a solitary decision, but following the process above, if I had to make a decision, whether popular or unpopular, I would have no problem making it.





Thank you to all our NAGM event sponsors for helping to make this year a success!



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