



## **PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release:

### **Henderson County Soccer Association Announces New Partnership with HFC for Competitive Soccer**

Hendersonville, NC- April 21, 2015: Henderson County Soccer Association (HCSA) is pleased to announce a new partnership with the Highland Football Club (HFC), the competitive soccer division of Asheville Buncombe Youth Soccer Association (ABYSA). This partnership aims to enhance training opportunities and elevate the development of players seeking to grow in the game of soccer. Under this agreement, HFC will start an Under9/Under 10 Academy Program in Hendersonville beginning in the fall of 2015. Over the next several years, HFC will expand to provide HFC Classic and HFC Challenge level programming as players' age out of the Academy program.

The HCSA Recreation Soccer program run by Henderson County Parks & Recreation Department will work closely with HFC to help direct players interested in more advanced training to find the proper level of play. By bringing their proven model of player development to Henderson County, the partnership will utilize the expertise and organizational capacity of HFC and improve the level of play through their professional coaching staff.

During the 2015-16 year, and while HFC is expanding the age groups it serves in Henderson County, HCSA will continue to provide Classic and Challenge level programming for those age groups where the interest and talent level is sufficient to support a team. HCSA tryout information can be found at [www.hendersoncountysoccer.org](http://www.hendersoncountysoccer.org). During this time, U11 to U18 boys and girls are welcome to try out for HFC Classic and Challenge teams based at the JBL Soccer Complex in Asheville. Information about HFC Classic and Challenge Programs and tryout registration is available at <http://abysa.org/>.



Over the next several weeks HCSA will be sending information from HFC about the Henderson County U9/U10 Academy Program. David Knapp, HFC Academy Director, will provide many details and HCSA and HFC will host an informational meeting for parents and coaches to answer your questions in May. You can also learn more about the HFC Academy Program at <http://abysa.org/academy>.

“This partnership will provide much greater access to competitive soccer programming for youth players in Henderson County, elevate the level of instruction and player development that our aspiring young soccer players are exposed to. It will allow us to focus our time and attention on what we do best; recreation soccer programming for over 700 Henderson County children” says Laura Rice, the Henderson County Parks and Recreation Department recreation soccer coordinator.

The benefits to Henderson County youth soccer players and their families are highlighted in the following bullet points:

- HCSA and HFC both believe that access to high level training for the youngest players (U9-U12) needs to be available in the players’ home community. Expecting that families can transport their child to Asheville for weekly training is unrealistic, and as a result, many aspiring young players either fall behind or lose interest in reaching their potential in their favorite sport. This partnership will also decrease weekend travel by providing more local matches at the Academy level.
- HFC competitive level soccer programs, including their U9/U10 Academy, are of the highest quality available in Western North Carolina and their approach to training young players is difficult, if not impossible, to replicate in a smaller community such as Henderson County. The expertise of five full time Directors of Coaching and a robust administrative staff will direct the competitive programming in the area.
- HFC subscribes to a player centered philosophy that places each player’s individual development at the forefront. The partnership with HFC will provide opportunities for players in Henderson County to be better prepared to play with HFC’s most competitive Asheville based teams in the older age groups. As a result, the top teams will have a deeper player pool to draw from and will be more competitive at the state and southeast region levels.

**HIGHLAND FOOTBALL CLUB**

PO BOX 1061 • ASHEVILLE, NC 28802

PHONE (828) 299-7277

FAX (828) 299-0133

INFO@ABYSA.ORG

- Strong and well organized competitive level programming benefits the local HCSA Recreation Soccer program in multiple ways. First, the availability of high level training in older age groups generates interest in entry level programming for the general population and increases participation rates. Second, recreation level participants enjoy their soccer experience more when dominant players move on to a more competitive level because they are able to participate in a way that is more rewarding.
- HFC and HCSA are committed to the accessibility of its programs and are able to provide financial assistance to players who are prepared for competitive level soccer but would otherwise be unable to participate.

This partnership between HCSA and HFC has been developed by Tim Hopkin, Henderson County Soccer Association founder and Mike Rottjakob, ABYSA/HFC Executive Director. Hopkin and Rottjakob have an extensive background in soccer administration and coaching spanning over 20 years in their communities. Both Hopkin and Rottjakob have received the North Carolina Youth Soccer (NCYSA) "Director of the Year" award recognizing their talents and dedication to youth soccer. The partnership that Hopkin and Rottjakob have built is committed to the future of player development following best practices and going beyond the goal of just match results.

The Henderson County Soccer Association Board is extremely excited about this partnership and what lies ahead for competitive soccer in Henderson County. Questions about this initiative can be directed to Laura Rice and Tim Hopkin at [HCSAsoccer@gmail.com](mailto:HCSAsoccer@gmail.com) or 828 674-9782.