



Debbie Murphy
Saints Soccer Club
OYSA 2021 TOPSoccer Coach of the Year

Debbie Murphy started the Portland Metro area TOPSoccer program in 2016 with the support of Saints Soccer Academy and Holy Redeemer. As one of the original Head Coaches and Board Members of Saints Soccer Academy, she felt that TOPSoccer was an important part of the club's overall mission to help bring the community together. As a doctor and local family physician for Providence Medical Group she felt that she could use her skills to help build a successful program to help this underserved community of people who wouldn't normally get a chance to play a team sport.

Debbie cites several contributing factors to the success the program has experienced.

The local community, Saints Soccer Academy and Holy Redeemer have all been generous with their time and resources, be it fields, equipment, registration, marketing outreach, personnel and beyond. She also credits networking with other OYSA clubs who have previously established TOPSoccer programs. They've been a wealth of knowledge and experience for her to draw from and it's allowed Debbie to tailor her program specifically to fit meet the needs of her TOPSoccer community.

From the very beginning Debbie was able to pull the unique resources and volunteers together to bring this program to life. She eventually gave up her coaching and board positions at Saints Soccer to focus solely on building the TOPSoccer program and it has absolutely flourished under her leadership. She's managed to bring a unique part of the community together and recruited helpful volunteer Buddies to help along the way.

The Buddies are a true gift and the differing skills they bring has definitely made a difference. Debbie feels that they get as much, if not more, out of TOPSoccer than the players. Seeing many of these young adults grow through the process of mentoring these players is something truly special. They are a big part of why the program has been so successful.

With the honest connection and trust that the Buddies are able to build with the Players, each one of these unique players finds their own way to express themselves through soccer and Debbie says it's a beautiful thing to watch. Seeing the player's communication skills improve as the sessions go is also enlightening. She also stresses that leaning on others with different skillsets has been a key to the successes they experience.

The peer-to-peer support with TOPSoccer is tremendous as these Buddies are able to work closely together to explore and find the true joy in sport; figuring out where you fit in, what it means to join a team, how to work together as a team, listening to each other, learning to share the responsibility of a joint effort and overall just having fun.

Through TOPSoccer Debbie has been able to truly engage the local community. One of her biggest thrills is seeing parents on the sidelines socializing with each other and watching their kids play, something she says they don't have too many opportunities to do. She also feels that one of the major successes of the program is watching the players blossom out on the field and watching them truly engage in the sport of soccer. The program seems to have truly enriched all of their lives and it shows.

The life lessons are amazingly plentiful through TOPSoccer and these Players, Families, these Buddies, these Coaches and the overall community are all the better for it.

"Debbie thank you for all of your hard work and dedication to the players, their families and your community. We appreciate you and are proud to have you as our 2021 TOPSoccer Coach of the Year."

-OYSA Board and Staff-