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Tyler J. Thomas : Young Alumni Award

St. Norbert College

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2013 Young Alumni Award



Tyler J. Thomas '10

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It doesn't necessarily cost a lot of money to play soccer. In particularly impoverished parts of Africa, children are known to use "trash balls" – plastic bags compressed into a ball and secured with twine – and to play in their bare feet.

But it does cost money to play soccer in American high schools – because those who typically develop the skill set to make the roster have spent their off seasons in costly club soccer programs.

Tyler Thomas played varsity soccer at Green Bay East High School. When he graduated from St. Norbert and began teaching mathematics at East, he sought an opportunity to

reconnect with the sport he was so passionate about, and eagerly accepted a position as boys' soccer co-coach.

But Tyler also wanted to contribute in a way that was true to his own values and those imparted by his St. Norbert education. He knew that many of the students in the school district lived at or close to the poverty line, making club soccer participation all but impossible, and varsity soccer therefore exceedingly unlikely.

So he began a new club program for disadvantaged youth in the area, charging minimal fees, offering scholarships and soliciting donations for equipment and tournament costs.

That organization, Allouez Ice, is thriving, with Tyler's teams winning all three tournaments they participated in during 2012. Tyler himself was named Wisconsin Youth Soccer's Boys' Coach of the Year. And his program participants are finding their way onto varsity teams around

the region.

Through Allouez Ice, Tyler is teaching participants not just to become better soccer players, but better young men. Leading by example, he instills the values of respect, honesty, hard work, sportsmanship and self-esteem.

Tyler also happens to be an outstanding young math teacher. His principal says his “instructional, assessment, and leadership knowledge is vast and comprehensive,” and that he is “everything that this school district is looking for.”

For the lessons he teaches – in the classroom, on the soccer pitch and in life – Tyler Thomas is this year’s recipient of the Young Alumni Award.

St. Norbert College

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