

Special Member Benefits Department Report for 2023-2024

John Koluder, Special Member Benefits Director

Increasing operational demands on volunteers and staff at the club level consume most of a club's available human capital, and these demands make it difficult for clubs to capitalize on several opportunities that require full-time attention or expertise. In July 2023, Indiana Soccer created the Special Member Benefits department (and Director's position) to provide this specialized support to aligned member clubs.

The Director role is focused on bolstering the roster of benefits available to member clubs and their constituents outside of Indiana Soccer's cadre of benefits already supported by registration fees. The Director is responsible for identifying, developing, and implementing special member benefits/initiatives emphasizing the generation of non-registration income.

During Indiana Soccer's 2024 fiscal year (August 2023-July 2024), the Special Member Benefits program focused on developing some fledgling partnerships that were already forged and cultivating others from scratch. Below are details on the six programs under development by Special Member Benefits during FY 24:

Elevation Sports (e-commerce platform)

After evaluation of Indiana Soccer's previous e-commerce solutions in the spirit wear and uniform categories, the back half of 2023 saw the Special Member Benefits department develop an updated program designed to provide a fundraising platform for clubs via online spirit wear sales – and ideally one that would also include the ability for uniform ordering as well.

This search focused on partnering with a vendor that could deliver on core elements required of a potential online merchandising partner for both Indiana Soccer's member clubs and the organization's Indiana Olympic Development Program (ODP):

1. Access to multiple tiers of apparel – and subsequent pricing – within a product category, starting with a baseline option of high quality
2. Competitive pricing in comparison to others in the e-commerce space
3. Ability to perform all decorations and alterations in house
4. Fast turnaround time for creation of a club's e-commerce page
5. Exemplar customer service throughout the purchasing process
6. Access to design software for sublimated uniforms
7. Thorough back-end reporting that could be shared with member clubs
8. Preferably an Indiana-based business

In March 2024, Indiana Soccer made its official partnership with Elevation Sports. Based out of South Bend since 2005, Elevation Sports is a national supplier of custom "spirit wear" apparel, team uniforms, and event giveaways. Elevation's partnerships with top apparel brands includes suppliers such as Nike, Nike Golf, Under Armour, Adidas Golf, Patagonia, The North Face, Marmot, Columbia, Cutter & Buck, and many more.

Elevation Sports offers a full array of decoration services like screen printing, embroidery, sewn on tackle twill lettering, sublimation, and digital printing. In addition to a strong offering of custom apparel and uniforms, Elevation also provides an extensive selection of promotional products that will allow them to brand about anything.

While member clubs were eligible to create their own stores at that time, Indiana Soccer strategically kept promotion of the program to a minimum in order to allow its ODP program to serve as a "trial partner" beginning in Summer 2024 with the creation of its spirit wear store, with the expectation ODP would also trial Elevation's uniform platform later that year. The Special Member Benefits Director will serve member clubs as the main point of contact, introducing them to Elevation representatives to help set up initial contact and from there assisting as need to be develop their club's online store and assist in promotion to the club's constituents via email marketing and creation of social media marketing materials.

becauseOne (donation platform)

becauseOne was an existing relationship prior to 2023 and entered FY 24 as Indiana Soccer's platform for online donations.

A family-owned company based in Greenwood, becauseOne makes collecting donations for non-profit organizations easier – and more social – than ever via its online giving platform. Organizations – including Indiana Soccer – are able to clearly communicate and seek donors for their most urgent needs by listing items for donation in their individual becauseOne Room. Inside the becauseOne platform, gifters (donors) are directly connected to these needs based on their specific passions and interests.

As of July 2023, the Special Member Benefits department assumed control of the partnership on behalf of the organization, which included regular meetings with becauseOne's representatives and updating the needs included in Indiana Soccer's becauseOne donation room.

In addition, becauseOne's Sponsorship Program allows gifters to make a difference by covering the annual cost for the Nonprofit's Room – and both Indiana Soccer and becauseOne's support team will work directly with clubs to help find individuals, companies, and/or organizations that can serve as sponsors.

For a second consecutive year, becauseOne representatives were on hand at Indiana Soccer's Annual General Meeting in March 2024 to promote their program in person and cultivate potential relationships – with one such success coming via Fort Wayne Sport Club, which created their becauseOne room in the following months.

Players Health (health insurance)

Another existing partnership that extended into the Special Member Benefits realm in FY 2024 was Indiana Soccer's relationship with Players Health.

Expanding from their relationship as a risk management partner for member clubs, the expansion into the Special Member Benefits space saw Indiana Soccer promote to players, families, referees, and volunteers access to Players Health's variety of health insurance plans:

- ACA (Affordable Care Act) Insurance plans
- Short Term Medical Insurance
- Accident Insurance
- Limited Fixed Indemnity Plan
- Telemedicine
- Dental Insurance

The Players Health website offers one convenient place where members can discover and compare the options available to them. After applying either online or by phone, members can start using their health insurance as early as the following day.

Players Health's mission is to create the safest and most accessible environment possible for athletes to play the sports they love. Their industry-leading insurance platform combines data-driven safety programs with insurance to ensure members receive the best products possible in a straightforward, easy-to-navigate online experience.

Bluehost (website hosting platform)

Few things cause more headaches for soccer clubs on the organizational side than their website. That is why Indiana Soccer partnered with Bluehost in Spring 2024 to give our member clubs a website hosting option that provides stability in the face of ever-changing personnel and webmasters. Bluehost was referred to the Special Member Benefits department by Marketing & Communications Director Gus Chikamba after he helped member club Logansport Soccer Club successfully create their updated website on the platform during winter 2024.

Through our partnership with Bluehost, Indiana Soccer has gained the ability to co-host member club websites utilizing the popular and user-friendly WordPress content management system for up to three years. With Indiana Soccer serving as the domain host, clubs now have a safe and secure web solution that guards against content and domain loss and provides additional support that will make website transfer and management as seamless and convenient than ever.

Go & Give (fundraising travel app)

In Summer 2023, Special Member Benefits assumed the lead on a burgeoning partnership with Go & Give, a newly developed travel app that gave users exclusive access to discounts on hotel

stays around the world and donated a portion of each booking back to a not-for-profit organization – in this case Indiana Soccer or its member clubs.

Activation for individuals was as simple as entering a club-specific code the first time they log into the Go & Give app, which would allow commissions from sales to be linked to their member club. Once logged into the app, members could also explore discounts on hotels in addition to air travel, rental cars, and travel insurance via the goandgive.com website.

Commission checks from Go & Give would be distributed to clubs directly on a quarterly basis should a threshold of \$250 be met; if that threshold was not reached, the total would carry over to the next three-month period in perpetuity until the threshold was met.

Positive Coaching Alliance

In Fall 2023, Indiana Soccer's Outreach Department was introduced to representatives from the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), and after preliminary discussions revealed alignment in our missions an official three-year partnership began in February 2024. The Special Member Benefits Director will manage the partnership from an administrative standpoint while leaning heavily on others in the organization with expertise in the coaching and education spaces to offer the workshops most pertinent to our members and communicate such offerings broadly and effectively.

Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) is a national non-profit working to provide all youth and high school athletes with a positive, character-building sports experience. Over the course of 25 years, PCA has partnered with 20+ million youth; provided 20,000+ live group workshops for leaders, coaches, parents, and athletes; as well as roughly 3,500 schools, districts, conferences, youth sports organizations, and park-and-rec departments to create a Development Zone® culture, with the goal of using youth and high school sports to create a positive experience.

Our partnership provides Indiana Soccer Association membership access to PCA's training for coaches, sports parents, student-athletes, and administrators, through live group workshops, online courses, and added online resources, such as follow-up tips and reminders for using sports as a positive youth development tool.

After an initial plan to offer the first two PCA workshops geared towards club leadership to member clubs in Spring 2024, those were rescheduled to August 2024. As part of the agreement, a total of 18 in-person workshops will be made available through the end of the partnership in February 2027, with an emphasis towards hosting such events as part of Indiana Soccer's Annual General Meetings each of the next three years.