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## Spring 2015 Newsletter

### Senior Leader Showcase

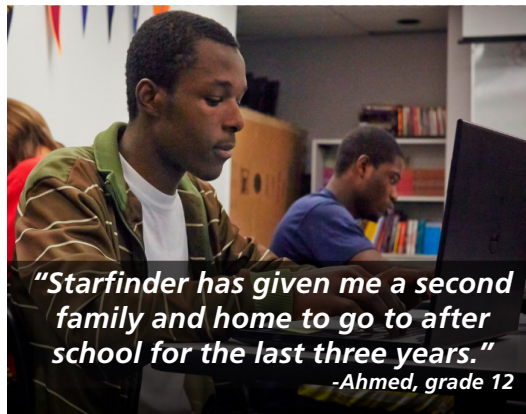
*"We are not just learning how to be the best version of ourselves on the field, but how to be the best version of ourselves outside the program as well."*

-Katerina, grade 12



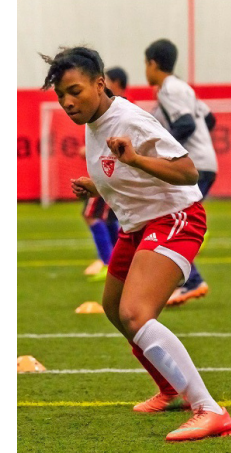
*"Starfinder has given me a second family and home to go to after school for the last three years."*

-Ahmed, grade 12



*"My favorite thing about Starfinder is that it can teach me like a school. The coaches are my teachers and soccer is my subject."*

-CC, grade 10



Starfinder's Senior Leaders Program is an intensive seven-month program for high school students that combines high quality soccer training with academic support, mentoring, and leadership development.

**This month we recognize the hard work and commitment of our Senior Leaders!**

*"Starfinder helps you break out of your shell; you eventually meet new people who become family."*

-Elizabeth, grade 12



*"I love the diverse community and the kind coaches that surround me. I also love that I feel comfortable around everyone."*

-Saraa, grade 9



*"Starfinder has developed me not only as a soccer player, but also as a leader. As somebody that has a voice not only on the field, but also outside the field."*

Alexis, grade 11





## Youth Council Leads The Way

In January Senior Leaders started taking the lead in a whole new way when Starfinder formed its first ever Youth Council.

"It's an awesome leadership opportunity for me and other Senior Leaders to give our input about the program and to contribute our own ideas and additions we would like to include in the program," said Katerina (age 18). "Youth Council allows us to be innovative and allows us to feel like we are working towards something greater than ourselves."



Every Friday, a group of 13 committed teens meets to discuss different aspects of the Senior Leader program, provide feedback to coaches, and participate in important decisions.

These teens have already made positive changes. The Youth Council expressed concern about the attendance policy and how those playing spring sports would be affected. With the coaches, the Youth Council created a new policy to allow teens to play spring sports without negatively affecting their attendance. The group has also organized an International Day Event and is currently working on tournaments and planning for graduation.

"We can't just preach about leadership, we have to give youth the opportunity to lead," said Jeanette Hibbs, Program Director. "The Youth Council bridges the gap between Senior Leaders and staff; it gives them a voice."



*Students celebrate cultural diversity at the Youth Council's first annual International Day*

## Sweat More, Spend More

Starfinder teens have a new way to reap the benefits of their hard work!



*Coach Casey helps participants choose how to spend their points*

This year saw the launch of the Starfinder Store, where participants trade points for great gear. Students earn points for things like good attendance or earning our weekly award for exemplary behavior, and can redeem them for anything from water bottles to cleats to coveted Starfinder jackets.

"This is a way for us to make a tangible connection between commitment and reward," said Jeanette Hibbs, Program Director. "We can tell them they'll benefit from commitment, hard work, and teamwork, but this is a way to actually show them and help them understand that effort earns you something in life."

Jeanette added that most of the participants save up for items with the Starfinder logo. "The kids want Starfinder stuff. The name really means something to them. They want to represent Starfinder."

"They can't buy that stuff with money," added Mykola Lyakhovolsky, program graduate and current Starfinder coach. "The only way they can get the Starfinder gear is by earning it."

Farid (age 18) traded points for a water bottle specifically because of the Starfinder logo. "I bring it whenever I'm out with friends, so they ask me about Starfinder and I get to talk about it."





## Where Are They Now?

*Hamed Badini is an Uber driver!*



*Ivory Coast-born Hamed Badini was a member of Starfinder's Class of 2011. He attended Parkway Center City High School and joined Starfinder after meeting founder Tony Williams while playing with Fairmount Soccer Club's U19 team. Currently Hamed works at a grocery store and is a driver for Uber, and he hopes to return to college soon. He still plays pick-up soccer every Saturday in Chester with friends.*

**How are the lessons you learned at Starfinder helping you now?**

I learned self discipline. There was a huge emphasis on academics at Starfinder. If you couldn't do the work in the classroom, you couldn't play on the field. It used to frustrate me because all I wanted to do was play soccer, but I worked hard on the academics. Now I understand why it was important and that hard work has paid off.

*"Today I take advantage of every opportunity no matter how small."*

**What's one great memory of your time at Starfinder?**

Coach Blake was one of my favorite people at Starfinder. He was the best coach because he was both fun and strict at the same time. One day we were doing the drills and not taking them seriously, so he got angry and made us do sprints for a long time. A couple friends and I didn't want to do sprints, so we hid behind the curtain. We didn't think he knew we were hiding since there were so many kids running at the same time, but he did. The following week he made us run even more sprints. We never hid again.

**Do you have any advice for kids currently at Starfinder?**

The coaches taught me that all the little things can add up to a big success. The little drills you don't feel like doing or don't find important will pay off in the end. Today I take advantage of every opportunity no matter how small.

## Celebrating our Seniors

### Graduation Celebration

June 10, 6:30-8:30 at Starfinder

Come celebrate the accomplishments of our **22 graduating seniors!**

RSVP by emailing [clare@starfinderfoundation.org](mailto:clare@starfinderfoundation.org) or calling 215-764-5410.

The members of the class of 2015 are on the verge of graduating and are busy planning their next steps. Many are already making decisions about college. We can't wait to see what the future has in store for our grads!

### Where is the class of 2015 headed next?



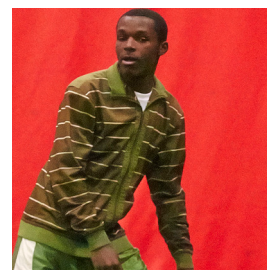
**Caelan Anderson** is headed to Temple University.



**Alioune Diasse** is enrolling at La Salle University.



**Farid Abdelrahman** is going to Temple to study either engineering or pre-med.



**Ahmed Ali** will go to Johnson & Wales University in Providence, RI.



**Jalal Ahmed** plans to go to the Community College of Philadelphia.



**Cydney Pennick** wants to study pre-med at Ohio State or the University of Maryland.

# Our Gratitude

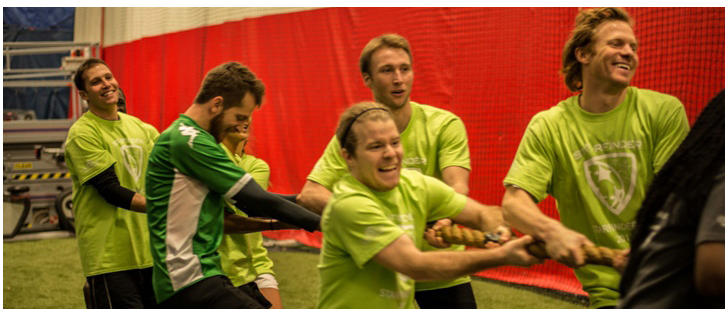
## YSC Takes Home the Cup

Our second annual Starfinder Cup was a big success! Thanks to all of our teams and sponsors, we raised \$14,000 for our programs and made a lot of new friends.



Returning teams BlackRock, Brandywine, and Pepper Hamilton were joined by newcomers AOS Digital, Ballard Spahr, Evolve IP, Pennoni, and YSC Sports.

The final match pitted Evolve IP against YSC. Evolve IP defended well against YSC's strikers, but after a high intensity game YSC won 3-1 and ended the tournament undefeated.



Team YSC plays tug-of-war during competitions between games

The Starfinder Cup wasn't just a day of soccer. It gave players a chance to get to know Starfinder, its staff, and especially its teens. Each team was assigned a Senior Leader team manager, who kept their group on track and cheered from the sidelines.

"I volunteered because the coaches told me it would be a really good chance to represent Starfinder and talk about what happens here," said Max (age 18), who helped the Pepper Hamilton team. "The adults were definitely interested, and we were happy to tell them [their registration fee] is being used in really good ways here: for supplies, for equipment, and so on for students. They asked a lot of questions and were really curious about Starfinder."

Players said they loved the teens' energy!

"[Alexis] really helped make the event fun for us," said Board member Alex Seldin, who played for the Pennoni team. "He was excited to meet our team and had a very upbeat attitude... He was a great representative of Starfinder. All our players were quite impressed by him."

Join us for Starfinder Cup 2016! For details on how to register a team, contact Clare Shepherd at 215-764-5410 or [clare@starfinderfoundation.org](mailto:clare@starfinderfoundation.org).

## Starfinder From a Student's Perspective

Starfinder Senior Leader Katerina (grade 12) recently shared her experience at Starfinder:



*Starfinder is a welcoming community filled with some of the most diverse individuals from all over the city. Coming to Starfinder is not just like coming to soccer practice for me, it's so much more.*

*The coaches and the senior leaders make it possible for Starfinder to be a tight-knit family in which we are able to grow and learn together. One of the most successful things about Starfinder is that we are a unit in everything that we do.*

*We have a mentor system here at Starfinder as well, where each senior leader is assigned to a mentor who checks up on us to see how we are doing in all aspects of our life. I love this part of the program because it shows that the coaches really care about us and want us to succeed in everything that we do on and off the field.*

*"Starfinder has become a family for me and a place I look forward to coming to every day."*

## Thank You Corporate Partners!

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To find out how your company can partner with Starfinder, contact Heidi Warren: 215-779-9426 or [heidi@starfinderfoundation.org](mailto:heidi@starfinderfoundation.org)