



Sports Friends

2008 Year-End Review



2008 Ministry Profile

2008 has been a year of great growth and fruitfulness in the Sports Friends ministry. We praise God for how he is using the simple, yet powerful platform of sports ministry to transform lives and strengthen communities. We also want to say "Thank You!" to our many friends and supporters. Without your encouragement, prayers and financial support, this ministry would not be possible. We hope you are encouraged by the images and stories below of God's work in 2008.



When we started this ministry with SIM 6 years ago, we would have never imagined all that God had planned for us and so many others He has called to serve with us in the Sports Friends ministry. We are humbled and continually amazed as we see God using sports ministry to impact many people's lives for all eternity.



We are currently working with over 1,500 churches or church planters in Africa and Asia that have started sports ministry programs which together have over 40,000 youth involved as participants. Trained sports ministry leaders are working with these youth to share with them (and their families) the love and word of God. During the last year alone, we have seen over 4,000 youth choose to trust in Christ as their Lord and Savior and have seen over 50 new churches planted through sports ministry. Thousands of additional youth are growing in their faith as they are mentored by our leaders. We praise God for His marvelous deeds in 2008!

A New Scoreboard

"Did you win?" This is the first question asked universally around the world of people participating in sports. In fact, for many people it is the only thing that matters - winning! Sports Friends, however, is training thousands of Christian coaches, church leaders and church planters to value a new scoreboard - a scoreboard where friendships made and deepened, Christian character developed, new lives committed to Christ, faith strengthened, and new churches planted are the measure of what is important in the sports programs - not just who wins.





Coach as Life Influencer

There is something extremely powerful about the relationship between a coach and players. The impact of a coach who shows love and attention to young people is tremendous. Sport provides a great environment for a coach to discuss with his players important character issues and life lessons about self control, respect for authority, honesty, teamwork and commitment. These discussions naturally transition to the truths of the Bible. Sports Friends teaches coaches how to be positive life influencers, to identify teachable moments, to catch the good in youth, to love and encourage, to incorporate Biblical teaching, to introduce youth to Jesus Christ, and to disciple them into greater Biblical maturity. Since 2002, Sports Friends has trained over 5,000 coaches and sports ministers to invest their lives to positively influence a generation of youth in Africa and Asia.

A Coach's Testimony

"Once I had a vision, a dream that God gave me. It was like a movie. I saw all my relatives and a church to build and organize and I heard God say, 'Serve My Church.' That is why I left being a teacher and went to Bible school for two years. God's passion for lost souls was burning in my heart, and I had a desire to reach out to the remote regions of Ethiopia. At the Ethiopian missionary school I attended, we were taught many methods for winning the lost. I chose three - sports ministry, medical treatment, and literacy program - and took them to Bora, to the Borana people, a nomadic, unreached people group near the border of Kenya. Of the three strategies, sports proved to be the best tool; it helped me to build friendships quickly with the people. That was four years ago. In the first year, there were 180 new believers! The community was happy to give us a piece of land, so we have no hindrance to using sports to reach people." - Testimony of Asfaw in Ethiopia.



New Churches Planted

"Joshua, a church planter trained by Sports Friends, has been trying to reach a village in rural Nigeria for many months. He recently began using soccer to build a relationship bridge to the boys in the area. Through soccer, he is developing deep, meaningful friendships. Sport has become the key which the Lord is using to unlock the hearts of these youth. Many youth in the village have recently come to faith in Christ, and they are having a powerful impact on their families as well. They have started a small church, and Joshua is discipling them throughout the week. While visiting this village recently, one father told us he has noticed a significant change in his boys since they trusted in Christ and he is very attracted to Christianity but is being held back by traditional beliefs and pressure from other elders in the community. Please pray for him. He could be a key to unlock the hearts of the adults in this Nigerian village." - report from Chris Lemanski, SF leader in Nigeria.

Throughout Nigeria and Ethiopia, church planters trained in sports ministry, like Joshua, are using the platform of sports to build relationships with youth and their families that lead to opportunities to share the love and word of God. Through sports ministry, God is planting and building His church in areas previously closed to the Gospel. In 2008, over 50 such churches were started through sports ministry (over 130 in the last three years).

Camp Langano

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Camping is a fantastic ministry! Camp Langano, in rural Ethiopia, offers youth one of the greatest times of their lives -- fun, food, sports, games, crafts, swimming, singing, drama, teachings, etc. Most importantly, at camp we have the opportunity to shower these young people with God's love and help them grow in their relationship with God.

"Abti was easily the best footballer at Camp Langano! He loved every minute we spent on the cow-pat splattered, goat-frequented field! He was one of 36 boys, some of whom normally live on the streets of Addis Ababa and who were part of a local church's ongoing sports ministry outreach supported by Sports Friends. As he encountered the love demonstrated by the team helping to run the camp . . . he said he felt something happening in his heart! He explained how he could see Jesus in the lives of the Christians as they loved each other and loved and served him. He returned home sharing his experience of Christ's love with his Muslim family. He must have been convincing! The day he returned home his parents called his coach and asked him to come and explain to them God's love for us in Christ!" - report from Jill Ireland, SF leader.

Sports Friends is developing the first residential youth camp in Ethiopia, a country with over 75 million people. In the future, we hope to minister to thousands of youth each year at Camp Langano. In 2008, we raised \$0.6 million in pledges of our total 3-year goal of \$1.4 million which will allow us to begin development of new camper housing and bath facilities to significantly increase the capacity of the camp.



Africa Expansion

Over 60% of the population of Africa is under 25 years of age. These young people face many extreme challenges - poverty, civil war, disease, HIV/AIDs, unemployment, lack of schooling opportunities, and more. They are crying out for help! They are looking for hope! We believe sports can be a powerful tool for African churches to build bridges to these young people and offer them friendship, love and hope.

Many church and mission leaders in Africa are hearing of how God is working through Sports Friends' ministry in Ethiopia and Nigeria and are eager to learn more about our ministry approach. Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Niger, Ghana, Zambia and Angola are a few of the discussions we are having. There is a growing football (soccer) fever on the continent as South Africa prepares to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Please be in prayer for strategic meetings we will have in South Africa in December to discuss our plans for expansion in Africa. 2009 will be an exciting year as we step forward to serve other churches in Africa to see God's Kingdom expanded through the powerful platform of sport!



Asia Launch

Five new Sports Friends missionary families arrived in Thailand in 2008 to set up our regional ministry base for Asia. We praise God for how He raised up these families and provided prayer and financial supporters to send them to the field. The team is currently studying language and culture in their new home. 2009 will be a year of significant ministry activity and growth as we begin working with our ministry partners in India, Thailand and SE Asia! Over one half of the world's population lives within a 4-hour plane ride of our new Asia base - over 2 billion of these people do not know or follow Jesus as Lord.



Linking South Americans

Can you imagine the instant credibility and access a soccer player/coach from South America (Brazil, Argentina, etc.) has in virtually any country in the world?! We have a great vision to mobilize many South American Christian soccer players to serve with us as we develop the Sports Friends ministry in Africa and Asia. These soccer players can get into countries and communities that would be closed to many of us from Western countries.

In October, Sports Friends had the privilege along with our SIM colleagues to attend and present at a large Brazilian missions conference where over 1,600 were in attendance. This was just a first step, but we are excited to think how God may link South Americans together with us to reach the world with a soccer ball!



Partnering Churches



Sports Friends offers churches in the US an opportunity to partner with Ethiopian churches and their sports ministry programs in a mutually encouraging and supporting partnership. We seek a strategic balance of praying, giving and going on the part of the US church. In 2008, we welcomed Highland Park Presbyterian Church (TX), Montreat Presbyterian Church (NC), College Park Baptist Church (FL), and Church at Charlotte (NC) as new partners. We praise God for their partnership with us and the churches of Ethiopian in expanding God's Kingdom both there and here!

Short-Term Teams Make Impact

In 2008, Sports Friends sponsored 9 different short-term teams to serve with us in Africa - college students from Houghton College, professional soccer players from the Charlotte Lady Eagles, professional soccer coaches, construction workers, friends and supporters of the ministry, and church partners all served on various teams. Wow - what a great contribution they made! They blessed our African brothers and sisters and were in turn greatly blessed by them. Here is just one person's story:

"I had an amazing time! It was nothing like I had imagined, and yet it exceeded my wildest expectations all at the same time. The Ethiopian team leaders there were amazing - what dedicated individuals! They make me want to be a better Christian every day. And the kids - oh my goodness - what absolute joy and excitement at getting to play for five days! My experience has made coming home a bit of a shock (which seems odd as I was only gone for less than 2 weeks) at the extravagance and waste and lack of appreciation I see everywhere."



Financial Review

Presented below is a summary of our actual ministry expenses for the year ended September 30, 2008 and our budget for fiscal year 2009. Keep in mind that none of the costs of supporting our Sports Friends missionaries are included in the figures below as each missionary is responsible for raising his/her own financial support. We praise God for His provision in 2008 and trust Him for our growing needs in 2009.

Expense Summary by Major Ministry Area:	Actual Results for the Year Ended Sept. 30, 2008	Budget for the Year Ended Sept. 30, 2009
Ethiopia Church-Centered Sports Ministry	\$233,600	\$290,805
Nigeria Church-Centered Sports Ministry	65,840	86,590
Camp Langano Facilities Development	84,400	445,825
International Ministry Development & Mobilization (incl. Asia and Africa Expansion)	78,683	241,555
Total Ministry Costs	\$462,523	\$1,064,775

Thank you for partnering with us in prayer and giving as God *transforms lives* and *strengthens communities* through the Sports Friends ministry around the world!

Blessings,
 Brian Davidson
 Tripp Johnston
 Co-Founders



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