



the *Directions* We Follow

By Kristina Young

Some of the most important moments of life happen when we come across an object or symbol that connects us to something bigger - a sign that shows us the next direction to take. We've all experienced it. From the awe of plucking the strings of a violin and feeling the sound resonate possibility...to being transformed by an old book and the great lesson it told. As human beings we stumble upon a great many things in life that steer us on our amazing journey.

For **Max Poore**, it was a simple soccer ball. At three years old he came upon one, kicked it around and discovered something: *it was fun!* The challenge of kicking a ball back and forth and running was something. Later he accomplished the challenge of how to dodge opponents on the field while balancing the ball. Soccer opened doors that brought him to other sports and introduced him to what a *team* was.

Born and raised in McDonough, Max went on to play soccer at Woodward Middle and Woodward High School as player number eight, central midfielder (a role divided between attack and defense on the field). His team brought home the high school championship in 2012. When I asked him what he enjoyed most, he said "learning to work together as a team."

Soccer is a complex sport. Physically and mentally it's demanding in terms of coordination and timing, with dribbling the ball along the field without losing it and following a play to the end line. I remember how it felt to play with a team and I get it. It's thrilling and rewarding to be in sync with your teammates and follow a play to the T on the field. It's even better when you quickly adapt around a mishap changing the play's course. That *team connection* is powerful and can teach strong values.

Max certainly recognized the power of team connection. He received a college scholarship to play for the Mercer University soccer team. His new team has won a few more championships and he continues to do well playing central midfielder, although he now wears the number twelve. He's almost finished. And even though he is majoring in business, he has learned the value of a strong team -- the benefits of cooperation and respect in a group...and how far those skills can take you. Those are qualities needed in every corner of life.

After he graduates and begins his chosen career, Max knows one thing for certain: that soccer ball brought him here. It was simple and fairly uneventful at the time; *but it was his sign and he followed its direction.*