



The **VIEW** from Norwalk Grassroots Tennis

Changing the lives of inner city children through tennis, free of charge, year round, indoors and outdoors.

Norwalk Grassroots Tennis, Inc. is a tax exempt Inner City Junior Tennis Program, supported by the United Ways of Norwalk/Wilton, New Canaan, Norwalk PAL, the USTA, Near and Far Charities and citizens concerned with the challenges faced by disadvantaged children of the Norwalk area.

The Class of '07

This year, for the third consecutive year, more than 325 youngsters participated in our program.



Our players at the Roodner tennis courts

We can't show you a picture of them all because they never are all in one place at one time, but we can describe some of their experiences:

- They played 18 matches against junior teams from country clubs and other towns including, Tokeneke, Redding Country Club, Wilton Riding Club, Burning Tree, Shore and Country Club, Ridgefield Athletic Club, Belle Haven, Four Seasons, Westport, Stamford Boys and Girls Club, Danbury Grassroots Tennis and the Cardinal Sheehan Center, Bridgeport.
- They participated in four USTA sanctioned tournaments, and hosted a US Junior Olympic Committee Rapid Rally Tennis competition.
- They participated in the CT USA Team Tennis Junior Indoor League, compiling a winning record of 9-1 over the season.
- They traveled to New Haven and twice to Flushing Meadow for the Pilot Pen and US Open Championships, respectively, collecting autographs from John Isner, Gael Monfils, Donald Young and Nikolay Davydenko. They really liked getting the autographs! A special contribution from a very generous Friend of Norwalk Grassroots Tennis (NGT) made it possible for 10 of our kids to attend the Open.
- They hosted the first "36-60" Jamboree ever held in Connecticut. "36-60" Tennis is a new format for tennis beginners being pushed vigorously by the USTA. It uses



At the US Open with Nikolay Davydenko



Learning the art of watching the ball

large, slow moving foam balls, small racquets, a tape instead of a net and a shorter court than standard tennis. Using this format, kids can begin to compete very quickly. Seven teams participated in the jamboree.

The summer is over, but the season is not. We expect that the class of '07 will be joined in the fall by new youngsters from the Roodner Neighborhood Center, and from the A.C.H.I.E.V.E. program. Saturday night indoor tennis at the Kings Highway Club will be resuming. New competitions are being organized for "36-60".

The Class of '07 will have been the most active in our 13 year history.



At the Pilot Pen Championships

A New Focus On Schoolwork

Some of our youngsters have a dangerous history of failure in school. That history often leads to giving up and alienation.



Art Goldblatt with a player during an orange break

These youngsters need to believe in themselves. Our players steadily improve their tennis. They develop critical self confidence as they see and feel their improvement. They become enthusiastic. The program has been able to harness that enthusiasm for tennis and connect it to their school work.

We intend to expand this aspect of NGT's assistance to its players. Through tennis, we have established relationships with our players which allow them to share their



NGT's "Norwalk Aces" at the Cardinal Sheehan Center, Bridgeport

Director's Column



David Kimani

VOLUNTEERS

We had a very successful summer with our youngsters playing the best tennis ever because of the ample time they had to practice.

Many thanks to the wonderful high school students who came to help teach the kids to play tennis, umpire matches, help serve snacks and overall build friendly relationships with all our participants.

Our program would not be what it is today if it were not for the many volunteers who spice it up in different ways.

There are those that strive to make our two annual fundraisers a great success—The “Play in May” and “Autumn Classic” tennis tournaments—you are our backbone and we say gracias!

There are those adult volunteers who give our kids wonderful private and group lessons and make my work a little bit easier. I greatly appreciate your help and so do the players.

There are those that mentor and encourage our kids on a one to one basis giving them great advice on how to deal with tough times on and off the court.

You make an impact in the lives of the youngsters that is immeasurable.

And finally there are those that help collect rackets, shoes, balls, and tennis clothes, thus equipping our youngsters with the necessary tools to play the game they dearly love.

To all our volunteers I say thank you because you put a lot of smiles on a lot of faces.

Everyone who would like to be a volunteer in our program is more than welcome to join us.

—David Kimani



Thanking GE for 137 cans of balls and a lot more

coordinator to work with the youngsters whose school reports show a need for extra attention.



Taking a break during the summer program

to even better results with this new focus.

academic problems with us, and to accept guidance. This effort requires many staff hours and continuing commitment, yet we cannot let these demands interfere with our operations as a tennis program or we will lose the foundation that makes guidance possible.

A generous supporter of NGT has made a dedicated pledge of \$5,000 to support the hiring of a qualified

We greatly appreciate this demonstration of understanding that the example and encouragement of an athletic coach can lead to dramatic improvement in schoolwork.

We have often heard from adults and family that the children in their care have benefited from our program in improved self confidence, social interaction and school performance. We look forward

Autumn Classic

A wonderful cocktail party at the elegant estate of Ronald and Kathryn Herman preceded an exciting day of tennis at this September's Autumn Classic.

Twelve doubles team competed in the tournament, and over forty guests attend the party. A highlight of the party was an address by Jean Mezidor, father of Fred and Dimitri, two of our best players. His younger son, Fred, first addressed the gathering with a polished statement about how much grassroots tennis has done for him and his brother. Fred's father then spoke most movingly about how proud he was of both his sons' accomplishments as he held up a certificate showing Dimitri's admission that week into the Honor Society of Fairfield Prep.

The winners of the Women's A division were Mary Cunningham and Krete Kirspuu. Winners of the Women's B division were Ann Goldblatt and Ellen Vicenzi. Winner of the Men's division were Keith Overland and Joe Pucciarelli.

The Autumn Classic raised over \$6,000 for the work of Norwalk Grassroots Tennis.

Our warmest thanks to those who made the Classic such a success.



Winner Dimitri Mezidor



Men's winners with David Kimani—Keith Overland and Joe Pucciarelli

Save The Date:

6th Annual 'Play In May'
Tennis Tournament
& Cocktail Party / Fundraiser
Saturday, May 3th

**Norwalk
Grassroots Tennis**

Changing the lives of inner city children through tennis,
free of charge, year round, indoors and outdoors.