

GROWING UP WITH SOUNDS OF GUNFIRE

JONATHYN YOUNG HAS PLAYED in our program for 12 years. This year he received a \$500.00 scholarship from the USTA to help him with his expenses at Post University, which he will attend this fall.

The USTA asked Jon to provide it with a short autobiography. This is what he wrote;

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GANGS FIGHTING EVERY DAY, hearing gunshots out of the blue, and cop cars in the middle of the night was my neighborhood when I was growing up. Most of the kids I grew up with were influenced to do the same. Their goals were to become the next top gangbanger or drug dealer. I'm not saying that I was perfect, but I looked around and saw exactly how I didn't want to be or how to live.

Growing up in that type of an environment was tough on me and taught me a lot of things; things as how to defend myself, to be more aware of my surroundings, and mainly how most of the real world looks like. Being home wasn't that great either. I remember when I would come home from the after school program and ask my mother what are we going to eat tonight. I would always get the "I don't know" answer like I wasn't her problem to deal with. If it wasn't for my grandfather, I would probably be with the kids I grew up with.

My life started to turn around when I was six years old and joined this program called Grassroots Tennis. It was a program for inner-city kids that couldn't pay for lessons. I went there every day and loved playing the sport. The kids I met there loved it too and weren't like the kids that were in my neighborhood. They had tennis to keep them out of trouble and in the right direction. This is where I wanted to be and who I wanted to be around.

Before I hit middle school every thing was looking up, until my grandfather died. He never even got to see me play tennis. That year was tough with him gone. When I got to Middle school with him gone, I slowly started to learn that soon I would have to be on my own. I started out middle school sad and mad at the world. I went to summer school for bad grades



Jon Young has been recruited by Post University

that year. It got easier after that year. My grades started to come up little by little. That made me understand I have to work hard no matter what I am going through at the time.,

The year after that started to hit us hard. We were kicked out of our apartment and had to go live at my grandparent's house. If he was still alive that would have never happened. With everyone living with each other things became hectic. My aunts and my mom would start arguing about everything. First it was about the bills and then it became about small stuff. After a while I got used to it.

Grassroots started to become more of a family to me. When I had a problem in school I would go to them. Most of my true friends came from that program. They taught me what my parents didn't or couldn't. Grassroots gave me my first job and there I learned how to take care of myself.

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Norwalk Grassroots Tennis exists to help young people like Jonathyn. It provided him with enough tennis skill to earn a college tennis scholarship. It trained him to be a tennis teacher. Most importantly, it gave him a circle of friends and role models and an alternative to a life of alienation.

Jonathyn participated last week in a planning session for our summer season at Colonial Village. It would have made any NGT supporter proud to see Jon's mature, thoughtful, self-confident, contribution to meetings.

We all wish him the best of luck at Post College.

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The Director's Column



David Kimani

IN MY LAST COLUMN I wrote about the different ways kids use our program; some, just to keep off the streets, some for exercise and friendship, and some who really want to improve their game.

These different goals are a challenge for us. Our experience shows us that we can do the most for the kids who are enthusiastic about improving. I see that the time that I work individually with the eager kids is very productive. Not only do they become good players, but they respond to our interest in their schoolwork. Unfortunately, this leaves less time to work with the others.

One way I have been able to deal with this is because we have so many talented volunteers. Many very capable high school players and adults help us provide interesting games and drills, others sit on the benches and work one-on-one for reading and arithmetic help. Because of them, almost all of our players, especially in the summer, develop close relationships with caring instructors. They free me to develop the strokes of youngsters who will one day lead their high school tennis teams.



IN MEMORY OF CINDY KERRIGAN

Cindy Kerrigan, who passed away on April 17, 2011, was a wonderful tennis player and the charismatic captain of a team, which includes Deb Hodes and several devoted NGT supporters. Ms. Hodes has made a substantial gift to NGT in Cindy's memory. We wish to express our thanks for this generous support. We are honored to be able to perpetuate Cindy's memory through our work in bringing tennis to disadvantaged children.

SAVE THE DAY

Please mark your calendar for Saturday, Oct. 1—the date for the 2011 AUTUMN CLASSIC Adult Mixed-Doubles Tournament. The high school Junior Boys and Girls Doubles will be held the next day, Sunday, Oct. 2. The wonderful cocktail party for all players and their guest for both events is scheduled for Saturday evening, Oct. 1.

Entry fee for Adults is \$125/ person, \$250/ team. Junior players \$75/person, \$150/team. For entries, please contact Lisa Bevilaqua at; Phone: 203-221-0960; email: lmbvilaqua@aol.com; snail mail: 27 Bonnie Brook Rd., Westport, CT 06880.

WE NEED YOUR PARTICIPATION.