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15LOVE
Giving Kids The Advantage

Capital Region Youth
Tennis Foundation

FALL 2011
Visit us online at
www.15LOVE.org



15-LOVE NAMES BUILDING “MICHAEL PICOTTE FAMILY YOUTH OPPORTUNITY CENTER”

The 15-LOVE building, located at 785 Washington Avenue in Albany has been 15-LOVE's home since August, 2009. The building has been transformed to fit the needs of thousands of inner-city youth in our community. 15-LOVE's location is a focal point at the intersection of North Main and Washington Avenues. Due to the generosity of the Michael Picotte Family, 15-LOVE has named our building the “Michael Picotte Family Youth Opportunity Center.” We are thrilled to have a permanent name on our permanent home!

If you are in the area, feel free to stop by and see our new sign and all the changes we've made to the Michael Picotte Family Youth Opportunity Center!



INSIDE:

- 1 15-LOVE Names Building
- 2 Executive Director News
- 3 Healthy Cooking Classes
- 4 Fore Love & Money
- 5 Faces of 15-LOVE
- 6 Liberty Mutual Grant

SPECIAL THANKS TO HARRIS BEACH PLLC AND CITIZENS BANK

This summer 15-LOVE had the opportunity to partner up with New York Law Firm Harris Beach PLLC and Citizens Bank to create fun programs for our summer participants and their families.

During the week of July 25th, Harris Beach sponsored 15-LOVE's first annual Green Week. Kids were encouraged to bring in a recyclable item that they then used to create a masterpiece as a class. The participants put on their thinking caps and came up with amazing ideas! For participating in Green Week, participants were given reusable tote bags, courtesy of Harris Beach.

Citizens Bank joined our Money Management off-courts on July 11 and 12, to talk with the kids about easy and fun ways to save money. At the end of each session, kids were given Citizens Bank water bottles. 15-LOVE also scheduled two Saving For College sessions for parents, but unfortunately both sessions were canceled due to weather. We look forward to working with Citizens Bank this upcoming summer to reschedule these sessions.

Special thanks to both Harris Beach PLLC and Citizens Bank for supporting fun, educational programs for our 15-LOVE kids!



15-LOVE LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

Thanks to the hard work by former 15-LOVE participant and current board member, Ryan Artis, 15-LOVE has launched a new and improved website. Visit www.15love.org and read about all the happenings at 15-LOVE. Get updates on fall and winter programming, biographies on 15-LOVE staff members, and you can now even make a donation to 15-LOVE online through PayPal! This website has been a project of Ryan's since the day it was created. As a student at Albany High School, he took the opportunity to make creating a 15-LOVE website a class project. He found a donor to donate the web space and domain name and created the entire site. He has continued to update the site throughout the years, even through law school at Case Western in Cleveland, OH.

Don't forget to check us out at www.15love.org or on our 15-LOVE Facebook page!

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



It's three months later and I think I'm still recovering from our amazing summer program! I mean that in the best possible sense – we had so many great things happening for our kids and their families that the summer just flew by, with little time for rest. We also set another attendance record this summer – with over 1,900 participants! Our staff

was amazing – they worked hard and never once complained! They made connections with the kids and made sure they had a fun, positive experience. Our parent and participant surveys were probably the most positive I've ever seen. We changed our schedule around a little to better accommodate the larger class sizes in the evenings and to fit in better with the USTA's new 10 and Under Tennis initiative, and I think it helped make things run a little more smoothly.

We began distributing used books to all the kids in the program, which was a very popular program. If you have any used children's books you'd like to donate for that purpose, we would be more than happy to accept them! Along with that, we added story time for the 4 and 5 year-olds in the program. They had never had the off-court (life skills) portion of the program the older kids have, so this year we added 15 minutes to their class time and began reading picture books with life lessons in the story. I was amazed at how well our instructors were able to keep the little ones interested!

We also began handing out healthy tips to families each week. A former 15-LOVE instructor and current family physician, Dr. Elena Rosenbaum, did most of the work on the creation side – coming up with ideas for the two tips and recipe that were handed out each week. The exciting part was hearing parents ask their kids what the veggie recipe was for the week and when they were going to try it! Besides the tips, we were lucky enough to have Chef Yono & Donna Purnomo donate their time, talent and food for our first healthy grilling night! We rented a tent, tables and chairs, and had everything set up

in our parking lot for families and Board members to share a delicious dinner. Families all left with a packet of recipes to try and make their own.



Kids show off new book bags thanks to Stewart's Shops



15-LOVE participants receiving free school supplies at the Jamboree

We were lucky enough to be able to take participants to both NY Sportimes World Team Tennis Matches this summer, thanks to John Nigro and the NY Sportimes. The kids had a wonderful time! We also held an NJTL Kids Day in conjunction with the first match, which was a huge success – lots of games and prizes for our kids, as well as kids from 3 other similar programs around the state.

Finally, as always, we ended the summer with our Jamboree! This year nearly 400 kids came to Washington Park to enjoy games, prizes and Barbara Yake's homemade cookies! Each participant received a 15-LOVE t-shirt and backpack (donated by Stewart's Shops) filled with school supplies, donated in part by the Standish Family Fund.

The one big difference for me this year was that I had a chance to be on the other side of the program – as a parent for the first time. Ben turned 4 in May and was excited to start playing tennis. It was one of those reflective moments for me – watching the “kids” I had taught to play tennis for so many years teaching my own son how to play - and doing such a great job of it! I don't get out on the court much any more, but I used to do a lot of the tennis instruction (and that is how I started out with 15-LOVE in 1996).

They say that one healthy decision leads to more healthy decisions, and it seems that is true for 15-LOVE as well. We turned our garage into a workout room, which led to the healthy cooking class series, which led to the healthy tips and healthy grilling night over the summer. Last summer, we handed out a few used books that were leftover to kids at the Jamboree, which prompted us to collect literally thousands of used books to hand out to every kid in the program and made us realize that the younger kids could use a story time. Next summer, you'll see us add yet another kids' literacy event to the mix. We just keep on rolling, and good things keep on happening. I can't wait to see what comes up next!

Thank you for your support in making all these dreams a reality!

With kind regards,

Amber Marino
Amber Marino

15-LOVE PROMOTES HEALTHY FAMILIES

Although childhood obesity prevention is important for all children, it is especially important in our inner-city communities, since race and socio-economic status play a role in childhood obesity (Hispanics and Blacks are at higher risk)* and the perceived cost of healthier foods deters some families. In October, 2010, 15-LOVE began a monthly healthy cooking class at the 15-LOVE office as a fun way to encourage healthy eating. Thanks to the numerous volunteers and local chefs who helped make this program a tremendous success, the 15-LOVE participants and their families walked away with numerous easy, affordable and healthy recipes to try at home.

For this program, 15-LOVE not only worked with board members, local restaurant owners and chefs, but also teamed up with Cornell Cooperative Extension who provided a dietitian to come to some of the healthy cooking classes and provide fun activities related to healthy eating and exercise. Graduate students from Russell Sage College Nutritional Program also attended a healthy cooking class and worked with the participants and their families on counting sugars in drinks. We were able to adapt their activity to use during our healthy living off-courts this past summer.

In addition to the healthy cooking classes, we continue to create new and exciting programs that fit into our healthy living program that will keep kids and families vested in keeping healthy. In previous newsletters you have read about the reconstruction of our garage that was turned into a workout room for the participants and their families to use, which has been a great addition to our office and program offerings. New this past summer, we handed out healthy tips each week to families that included an in-season vegetable recipe, and tips related to exercise and diet to try for the week. Those were developed with the help of former 15-LOVE instructor and current family physician, Dr. Elena Rosenbaum. 15-LOVE Board Member and Pilates Principle Owner, Nuhar Jaleel, welcomed

15-LOVE families to her pilates studio for a Zumba class, which we hope to make an ongoing activity. In the Spring of 2012, we are working towards creating vegetable gardens in place of the old greenhouse that was attached to our building and recently taken down. We plan to use the vegetables that are grown at our upcoming healthy cooking classes and for families to take home to prepare in their own kitchens.

We wanted to send a special thank you to the following volunteers who helped make our first year of healthy cooking a great success:

Nuhar Jaleel (Owner, Pilates Principle) & **Mary Jean Krackeler** – Quinoa Wrap with Salmon or Turkey, Spinach, Feta Cheese, Avocado & Miso Dressing

Barbara Yake – Healthy Holiday Baking

Genny Pauley (Dietitian, Cornell Cooperative Extension) – Fruit Parfait

Herb & Cynthia Shultz – Fruit Smoothies & Chicken, Rice and Salsa

Terry Zarillo & Mario Marino (Owner, Marino's Flying Pizza) – Turkey Meatballs, Whole Wheat Pasta with Marinara Sauce

Nuhar Jaleel (Owner, Pilates Principle)– Fruit and Seed Bars, Citrus Parfait and Cranberry Lentil Salad

Mario Marino (Owner, Marino's Flying Pizza) – Healthier pizza made with whole wheat crust, low-fat cheese and vegetables

Maureen Klein – Healthy Soups

Chef Yono & Donna Purnomo (Owners Yono's & dp's) – Healthy Summer Grilling

Anne Trimble (Owner, LaSerre Restaurant) – Pasta Primavera

We are currently planning our upcoming healthy cooking nights, if you or someone you know is interested in hosting a healthy cooking class at 15-LOVE, please contact Executive Director, Amber Marino, or Development Director, Katie Genovese, at 438-2039.

*All childhood obesity statistics found at: http://www.childrenshospitals.net/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Site_Map3&CONTENTID=49561&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm



ANNUAL FORE LOVE & MONEY EVENT BREAKS RECORD

On a gorgeous summer day on June 13, over 200 people came to Schuyler Meadows Club for lunch, tennis, golf and dinner to help support the 15-LOVE Program. The event was an amazing success breaking all previous years' records by netting over **\$90,000!** We extend our gratitude to all those who participated, most particularly our corporate sponsors who are listed on the right hand side.

The day was filled with laughter, high energy and delicious meals. Special thanks to our Mistress of Ceremonies, Channel 13's Benita Zhan, who helped kick start our night and led us in a successful live auction. 15-LOVE participants were on hand to meet those in attendance and thank them for their continuous support.

Thanks to the generosity of those who participated in this year's event, 15-LOVE can continue to offer numerous free programs offered to thousands of inner-city youth throughout the year and work on creating new and exciting programs.

We look forward to celebrating the 20th Annual Fore Love & Money event with you on June 11, 2012!



Halloween COSTUMES WANTED

Do you have Halloween costumes sitting in your basement and you don't want to throw them out, but don't know what to do with them? At 15-LOVE, we are currently collecting Halloween costumes that we will give away to those in need for Halloween 2012. As the price of costumes continues to skyrocket, we wanted to give those in need an opportunity to pick out some great costumes without having to worry about the cost.

Here's a fun fact. According to the group Green Halloween, if half the kids in the U.S. who celebrate Halloween donated costumes instead of throwing them away, the nation's annual landfill waste would be reduced by 6,250 tons. That's about the weight of 2,500 mid-size cars.

If you do have costumes you are interested in donating, please feel free to bring them to the 15-LOVE office located at 785 Washington Avenue, Albany.

15-LOVE KICKS OFF SUMMER BOOK GIVEAWAY PROGRAM

In the Spring of 2010, St. Brigid's, a local Catholic school in Watervliet, closed their doors. Their library was filled with books and had no place to go. Having heard of our plan to hand out free, used books to the kids in our summer program, the pastor of St. Brigid's offered the entire library to 15-LOVE and we gratefully accepted.

Study after study shows that during the summer months, students lose some of the education they gained during the school year and that gap is the most pronounced in low-income areas. After reading another study on this topic, and "accidentally" running a trial book

giveaway in 2010 that was wildly successful, we knew we had to act.

About 1,000 kids this summer were given the opportunity to choose a book to keep, and often they asked when more books would be coming. After his first day at 15-LOVE, one kid was overheard saying to his mother, "...the tennis part was ok, but getting the free book is great!" We were thrilled to hear this response. Former 15-LOVE participant, Lyndsi Holmes, recent graduate of Nazareth College who earned her degree in Elementary Education, organized the entire giveaway program. Each day she would be in and out of the office, refilling bins to bring out to the kids

who were requesting more books. She barely kept up!

Each kid who received a book was also given a fun 15-LOVE bookmark with an encouraging message to keep reading and a design that showed the tennis ball in our logo sticking out of the top of the book.

We plan to continue this service next summer due to the overwhelming positive response. On the parent and participant surveys at the end of the summer, nearly every respondent claimed that their child had at least started to read the book, and 100% of them appreciated the program.

THE FACES OF 15-LOVE

Since 1990 over **35,000** inner-city youth have come through the 15-LOVE Program. Thanks to the support of our donors, today's inner-city youth continue to receive numerous free programs offered by 15-LOVE throughout the year that include:

- College Prep Program
- SAT Prep Classes
- Book Power Clubs
- Free School Supply Distribution Program
- Excellence Program
- Team Tennis
- Leadership Training Program
- 15-LOVE Loves to Read Program
- Healthy Cooking Class Series
- Healthy Tips for Healthy Families

Here are just some of the faces of our current and former participants who took part in many of the free programs you help support.

CLINTON MATHAI



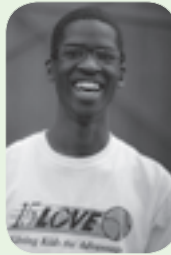
-Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
-Majoring as a Physician-Scientist
-Clinton will earn his B.S. along with his M.D. in RPI's Albany Medical College Program

SHALINI NAGARAJ



-SUNY Binghamton '15
-Majoring in Biological Science
-Plans to go to Medical School to become an Anesthesiologist

JOSH FIELDS



-Union College '15
-Majoring in Engineering
-Plans to have a career as a Mechanical Engineer

CURTIS FARMER



-Schenectady High School '17
- Dream school Union College
- Aspires to become a Veterinarian

kids vantage

15-LOVE KIDS ARE ACE AT NETA SECTIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS AT YALE UNIVERSITY

Story by 15-LOVE Participant **Matt Benton**

This past year, my Connecticut experience had to be the best experience I've had in tennis. At the same time it had to be the most challenging. I learned a lot from this year about myself, my morals and what I want to accomplish. This year I learned that hard work, honesty and a level head gets the job done.

This summer I had the hardest match of my tennis career. It was a hot two hour and 40 minute match that I didn't just have to play, but I had to work for. The first adversity I had to overcome was the crowd support for my opponent

and the second was some questionable line calls. The match got pretty heated because of questionable line calls and in addition, I had to deal with the normal challenges, the summer heat, cramps, and endurance. After 2 hours and 40 minutes I came away with an exhausting win. I was congratulated for my hard work and focus by the 15-LOVE team and my opponent's fans, including his coach and parents, it was a great feeling.

In the future I hope to make it even further into the draw. This year was the most rewarding tournament in Connecticut I've been to. I would like to thank 15-LOVE for the experience along with the 15-LOVE board and supporters sincerely. Not only did I learn a life lesson, I had fun too!



15-LOVE participant **Matt Benton**

15-LOVE HOSTS NJTL KIDS' DAY

On a rainy day in July, 15-LOVE hosted three other NJTLs (National Junior Tennis & Learning) from around the state for a day of tennis and fun! All who participated were given a tour of the University at Albany campus, and then moved indoors to play tennis games and win prizes. The NY Sportimes donated pizza for dinner, and a kids' band played before the NY Sportimes match. Kids received free t-shirts as part of the GE Kids in Free series, as well as t-shirts from the Kids Day and a free book bag from the Northern Region of USTA / Eastern. They also received free tennis rackets from the NY Sportimes.

Special thanks to board member John Nigro who purchased tickets so the 15-LOVE kids could watch the Bryan Brothers on July 18 (following the Kids' Day) and Serena Williams on July 19. Three 15-LOVE kids, identical six year-old twins Carly and Lizzy Mathews interviewed the (also identical) Bryan Brothers and Nazaru Kotey had the opportunity to interview Serena Williams the next night. They did a great job asking the pros some fun questions.

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**HELP US WIN \$2,500 FROM
LIBERTY MUTUAL**

Liberty Mutual is awarding \$2,500 community grants as part of its Responsible Sports program championing and celebrating responsibility in youth sports.

Here's how it works:

-Every person who completes the online Responsible Coaching or Responsible Sport Parenting course and the 10-question review quiz earns one point. The twenty (20) organizations around the country that get the most points will earn a \$2,500 grant.

-Since we'll only be competing against organizations of similar size (three separate divisions), we have a great chance to win! Of course, the more people we get to take the course and quiz, the better our chance of winning the Community Grant.

-Let's all work together – for the kids, and for the \$2,500 grant. Just think of the ways this grant could help us: equipment, books, court time – you name it!

Get started at ResponsibleSports.com/Grant today!

We appreciate your support!

