

vantage point™

15-LOVE 
Giving Kids The Advantage

Capital Region Youth
Tennis Foundation

SPRING 2008

Visit us online at
www.15LOVE.org

Summer Program Gearing Up, Adding Sites

15-LOVE's Summer Program will run this year from June 30 through August 13 at parks in Albany, Schenectady, Troy and Rensselaer. To view the full schedule, check out the 15-LOVE website (www.15love.org), or call the 15-LOVE office (438-2039) for details. The end of summer Jamboree will be held on Thursday, August 14 (rain date Friday, August 15) at Albany's Washington Park. Volunteers are always needed! Please call the office if you are interested.

Also, 15-LOVE distributes school supplies to the participants in the program at the Jamboree. Donations of school supplies and/or money to purchase school supplies are needed for this initiative and are greatly appreciated. Please call the office for an updated list of supplies needed this year or see the Donations column on page 2.

New this summer – 15-LOVE will be running a “Week 9” program in Lansingburgh and Cohoes. Funded by the Times Union Hope Fund, Week 9 (the week after our regular 8-week summer program ends) will be a week-long “test” in each of these cities. 15-LOVE would like to make sure that there is interest in these communities and that the sites fit within our mission of serving inner-city, low-income children. Depending on the results of these programs, the sites may continue as just week-long sites or become full summer sites in the future.

PROGRAM NEWS

Sara Pennypacker Awarded Little d Honors

Children's book author Sara Pennypacker won the Third Annual Little d Award for her book, *Clementine*. The award was presented on November 12th at the Fort Orange Club in Albany. Ms. Pennypacker was gracious in receiving her award, offering compliments to the Little d Award Committee and 15-LOVE. The next day, she spoke to third graders at Giffen Elementary School (the site of one of the Book Power Clubs), and the Book Power Club students from Arbor Hill Elementary joined the group in the Giffen library. Ms. Pennypacker told the students (albeit cryptically) about how much she makes as an author, how old she is and how she comes up with her ideas for the books she writes. What she wouldn't tell the students was *Clementine's* brother's name. It remains a well-kept secret.

Later in the day, Ms. Pennypacker joined Mayor Jennings at City Hall in Albany for a reading of the book in front of students from other area schools. Mayor Jennings kicked off the “Kids Read the Little d Book” where all students in the appropriate grade level(s) in the City of Albany are encouraged to read the Little d Award-winning book each year.



Sara Pennypacker talks with book club members after talking about her award winning book, “Clementine”.

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School Supplies Needed for End of Summer Jamboree

At the end of summer Jamboree, school supplies are given to over three hundred children to get them ready for the new school year. Donations of the following items, (with the number still needed in parenthesis) either from individuals or businesses, are greatly appreciated:

- ❖ Pencil top erasers (800)
- ❖ Folders, two pocket, no design (300)
- ❖ Glue sticks (25)
- ❖ Highlighters (175)
- ❖ Notebooks (regular 250 and college rule 300)
- ❖ Filler Paper (regular 150 and college rule 150)
- ❖ Pencil Sharpeners (100)
- ❖ Protractors (150)
- ❖ Backpacks (400)

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Help Us Share What We Do!

...“I just heard about 15-LOVE from a friend – is it really true that this program is free? This will help so much. I’m a single mother and can’t afford much for my kids, but they will love this!” ...“I can’t believe I’ve never heard of 15-LOVE – what a wonderful program!”...“How long have you been around? This must be something new?”... “I wish I had heard about this program when my older kids were young.”... “I just want you to know how much this program means to my son. He now plays on his High School tennis team and has made lots of friends. This has changed his life.” ... “The friendships my daughter has made through 15-LOVE are so important to her. Thank you.”... “My daughter truly changed when she joined 15-LOVE. She was so shy and unsure of herself. Now she’s confident and happy – it has really made a huge difference in her life.” (This girl is now a doctoral level Physical Therapist.) These are all comments I’ve heard from parents in the last few months about 15-LOVE. You can imagine my pride, and yet there is work to do.

These comments confirm what we already know: that 15-LOVE is one of the Capital Region’s “Best Kept Secrets.” The problem is... we’re not trying to keep it a secret! I am always telling people about 15-LOVE, as I am passionate about what we do. I’ve seen lives transformed and watched as the kids we serve grow into wonderful young adults. This is what gets me up in the morning, (well... that and my 11month old son Benjamin...at 5am no less.) I encourage each of you to talk to people you know about our program. Ask those with a little free time (a couple of hours a week) to volunteer at our book clubs, ask friends to join us for a day of golf or tennis at Fore Love & Money (Monday, June 9), ask business people and community leaders to sponsor our kids at tennis tournaments and college visits. And...most importantly, guide youth in need of direction to our programs. (Visit our website at www.15love.org for details).



Simply forwarding this newsletter to others after you’ve read it can help spread the word. (Better yet, let us know who we could include on our mailing list.) Tell folks that while we’re about tennis, what we’re really about is education and life skills, which we teach through tennis. I sometimes tell people that we “trick” kids with free tennis lessons, but that the program is really about the off-court session that comes with every lesson where the kids learn about healthy living, education, money management, peer pressure, diversity and a whole host of other topics. Our mission is to grow our young people into healthy, productive citizens. Help us spread the word!

With kind regards,

Amber Marino
Amber Marino

CONGRATULATIONS...

15-LOVE RECEIVES USTA RECOGNITION

USTA Eastern named 15-LOVE as the recipient of the 2007 Multicultural Participation Award and named Executive Director Amber Marino as the Regional Volunteer of the Year (Northern). Both Marino and the organization were honored at the annual Eastern Tennis Leadership Awards Dinner in January in White Plains, N.Y.

KidsVantage

Stories Written by 15-LOVE Participants



Dinner and Siena Basketball Make for a Great Evening

By: Sameer M., Age 16 *Sameer is an Excellence Program Participant and a tenth grader at Niskayuna High School.*

My name is Sameer M. and I have been a seven year participant of the 15-LOVE program. Ever since I have belonged to 15-LOVE, I have had many memorable experiences but none like the time when a man named John Nigro, a long time supporter and contributor to 15-LOVE, invited the Excellence team to a Siena basketball game.

All I knew when I first heard of this trip was that we would be going to a basketball game but what actually happened blew me out of my mind. Before he took us to the basketball game, he took us a restaurant in a private room and ordered all of us pizza; a lot of it. We were able to meet some new people who were also supporters of 15-LOVE and the whole event was very fun. After dinner, we went to the Siena basketball game with Mr. Nigro accompanying us as well. I knew I was going to a basketball game and spending some time with our team but with all of the other supporters there, the trip became a whole lot better.



This trip was very also very beneficial to the relationships between the kids too. It was nice to talk to the younger participants outside of tennis practice. A lot of the older kids talked about their college goals. I learned that many other kids who had been in the program attended Siena College. And I learned that most of us absolutely love ice cream.

I know 15-LOVE is supported by many people who, out of the kindness in their heart, help because of their selfless nature. It helps us so much that this connection is so strong. By meeting and spending time with these people, the bonds can only become stronger. I would like to personally thank the many people who were associated with making this trip such a memorable experience.

Excellence Program Team Wins League Title

By: Rachel F., Age 12 *Rachel is an Excellence Program Participant and a sixth grader at Central Park Middle School.*

The 15-LOVE 14B's boys and girls team had an amazing season this year. We were undefeated and then we had the determination, perseverance, endurance and teamwork to go to the championship and win. With help from Mr. Benton (our volunteer coach) and a lot of practice, we were able to make it this far. We had an outstanding come back from the last two years.

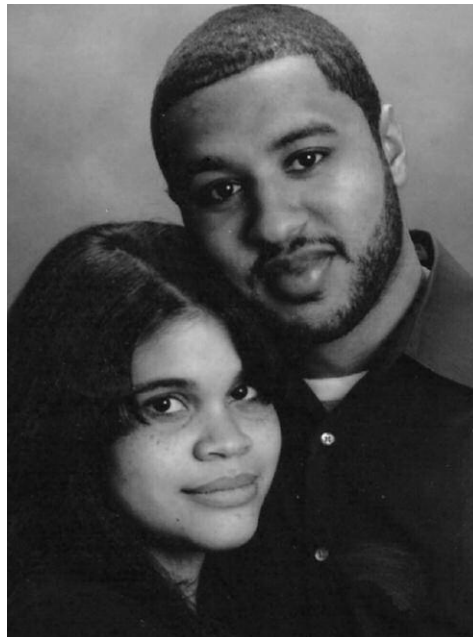
Two years ago, our 12's team wasn't doing so well. Everyone was still learning new techniques and skills in tennis. Even though we lost all of our matches, we still had fun and we learned that winning is not everything. As long as we did our best and had fun, we were all winners.

Last year, our team played in the 12 and under age group again for team tennis. We made it to the championship, but were finalists. Our skills improved over the past year. We practiced and worked hard to succeed. Playing in tournaments, working on our fitness, and lots of practice helped us to become better.

This season we played in the 14 and under age group and we had an undefeated season and won the championships. All of our teammates played in USTA tournaments, so that was a major part of our experience in playing matches. Our team ranges from ages 10 to 13, and a majority of the players were age 12 and under. Now we are going to New York City to hopefully continue our winning streak.

We were determined to achieve certain goals such as winning the championship this season. All we need is teamwork and more practice to continue to achieve our goals. Even if we do not win, we all will feel like winners for making it this far, but we will know to try harder next time so we can come out to become winners in the end.

15-LOVE Alumni Q&A



Nathan Zach

Nate Zach currently serves as a 15-LOVE board member. He independently tutors students in various subjects and organizes several youth ministries in the City of Albany. He also performs missionary work in Africa and has traveled to Africa twice to lead youth conferences. Nate is married, and he and his wife Lydia are expecting their first child in October 2008.

How many years were you involved in the 15-LOVE program?

NATE: I have been involved with 15-LOVE for fifteen years as a participant, volunteer, coach, site director, and board member.

What did you study in college?

NATE: I studied English and Religious Studies and received both my B.A. and my masters degree from SUNY Albany.

Take us back to your days in the 15-LOVE program... give us your most memorable moment.

NATE: My most memorable moment was my first year going to the Harlem Tournament. Although I barely won a point and was so nervous I could barely hold on to my racquet, it was a great learning experience. Of course I did not win the match but it really lit a fire in me to excel and practice hard.

What is something that you learned in your years in 15-LOVE that you still use today?

One thing 15-LOVE gave me that I use today is it helped me to realize the power of positive friendships. What I mean is having positive friendships helped me to excel in tennis and life because having these friendships kept me excited about tennis and made me feel a part of something larger. This is a feeling that is applicable in many arenas of life and everything it has to offer.

What advice would you give to younger kids currently participating in 15-LOVE?

NATE: Enjoy it, work hard, and give your all to it because 15-LOVE will give back to you in some really awesome ways.

“Enjoy it, work hard, and give your all to it because 15-LOVE will give back to you in some really awesome ways.”
- Nate Zach

15-LOVE 
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College Prep Program Welcomes New Program Coordinator



Program Coordinator Tracy Coffey works with Djuan B., a sophomore at Watervliet High School.

This past October, Ms. Tracy Coffey began working with the high school students in our College Prep Program. Coffey comes to 15-LOVE with a wealth of experience, having worked previously as the Assistant Director of Admissions at Cardinal Cushing College in Brookline, MA and the Assistant Dean of Academic Advising and Director of Freshman Advising at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY. Coffey has already made an impact on the program, doing an outstanding job connecting with the kids and making herself available to meet their hectic schedules. Coffey has also added a Study Skills Workshop to the program, an area in which she has some expertise. The workshop was well received by the students in the program and will be ongoing.

In addition to Coffey, Ms. Wendy Fox has joined the College Prep Program, as 15-LOVE's "Scholarship Expert." She is assisting high school seniors in finding and applying for suitable scholarships. She, too, has done an outstanding job working with the students and motivating them to complete their applications.

Number of Donors for Year End Appeal Sets Record

Our thanks for your tremendous generosity...

The number of donors for the 2007 Year End campaign increased by 31%, setting a new record. The campaign raised nearly \$70,000. Our heartfelt thanks to all whose efforts and support continue to allow us to further our mission of teaching life skills to area youth through tennis.

Did You Know...

For Federal and New York State Employees, the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and the State Employee Federal Appeal (SEFA) are another way to donate to 15-LOVE. We are officially listed as the Capital Region Youth Tennis Foundation. Feel free to visit their websites for more details: CFC: www.uwcr.org/site/campaign, and SEFA: www.sefa.state.ny.us. Our CFC number is 46268 and our SEFA number is 50-353.

15-LOVE Trains Physical Education Teachers in Albany City Schools

This past January, Executive Director Amber Marino held a training program for physical education teachers in the Albany City School District. Eighteen teachers from nine different schools attended the workshop held in the Montessori School gymnasium. The training, part of the USTA Schools Program, was designed to show teachers how to implement tennis into their physical education curriculum and provide group activities and games to get kids interested. As part of this training, each school received free equipment (portable nets, rackets and foam balls) from the USTA. Marino demonstrated large group games that 15-LOVE employs, which got the competitive juices flowing. There were dives across the floor and complaints when the group had to move on to the next game. Needless to say, the teachers had fun and found the training useful.

15-LOVE plans to try to provide after-school programming at each of the schools that decide to implement this program into their curriculum.

Capital Region Youth Tennis Foundation

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Save the Date.....

15-LOVE's 16th Annual

FORE LOVE



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Golf and Tennis Outing

Monday June 9, 2008

Schuyler Meadows Club

For more information, contact the
15-LOVE offices 518-438-2039