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Giving Kids The Advantage

Capital Region Youth
Tennis Foundation

SPRING 2011
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15-LOVE GRADUATES CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2011!

Colonie High School

Tommy Nguyen will be attending University of Buffalo where he plans to major in Mechanical Engineering.

Niskayuna High School

Shalini Nagaraj will be attending SUNY Binghamton where she plans to major in Biological Science.

Schenectady Central High School

Josh Fields is currently deciding between RPI, Union College and University of Rochester. Josh plans to major in Engineering.

Cornell University

Colleen Brisport is graduating Cum Laude with a degree in Industrial and Labor Relations. Colleen is currently applying to law schools, where she will focus on Human Rights Law.

Nazareth College

Lyndsi Holmes is graduating with degrees in Political Science and Inclusive Education. Lyndsi plans to attend graduate school at Nazareth this fall majoring in Education.

NY SPORTIMES HELPS SUPPORT 15-LOVE

Are you planning on attending the NY Sportimes matches on July 18 (Bryan Brothers) or 19 (Kim Clusters)? If so, when you call (518-378-BUZZ or 518-365-6603) and order your tickets, mention 15-LOVE. They will donate \$10 back to 15-LOVE for every person who mentions our name when purchasing a ticket. Don't miss the action at this year's NY Sportimes!

CONSTRUCTION HAS BEGUN



Since August 2009, the time we moved into our home at 785 Washington Avenue, we've made quite a few improvements to our building by creating more usable space. We've converted our garage into a workout room that is open to all of our participants and their family members, the basement was transformed into a Kids' Den, and our side entrance became a coat and storage area where participants can leave their tennis equipment and other belongings. We thought we had converted every last space possible, but this past winter we were informed that the greenhouse that is attached to our building would become our next project. The greenhouse was leased out to our neighbors who ran a flower shop business for over 20 years, but due to difficult times the tenants were no longer able to keep their greenhouse business running. After much discussion and consideration from the board and meetings with a local contractor, the decision was made to take the greenhouse down, due to structural issues and safety concerns.



We had many ideas of what we could do with the space from putting in a small tennis court or creating a picnic area for the kids and staff, but in the end the decision was made to use the space to create vegetable gardens! In a time when so much focus is on healthy living and sustainable agriculture, and since our healthy cooking class series has been a huge success with our participants and their families, we thought this was a great opportunity to enhance our healthy living program and create a green space in the heart of Albany! Thanks to the help of board member Lynn Derry a beautiful plan has been created to make this happen. The participants will learn how to grow and care for the vegetable beds and the vegetables will be used at our future healthy cooking classes.

Our door is always open and we invite all of you to come and see all of the wonderful updates that we have made to our 15-LOVE home.



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15-LOVE WELCOMES MAXINE BRISPORT

This past fall 15-LOVE welcomed part-time Education Director, Maxine Brisport, to the 15-LOVE team. Maxine is currently a school psychologist in the Troy City School District.



Maxine's daughter, Colleen, was a participant with 15-LOVE for many years, so she has seen first hand the positive effects 15-LOVE has had on so many youth.

Maxine will focus her time on conducting the Leadership Training Program, *Today's Teens – Tomorrow's Leaders*. Maxine is passionate about the leadership program because she believes that we need responsible and effective leaders in our communities, cities, country and the world. Maxine is hoping that several students will get that spark from the leadership training, and become leaders in their school today and their communities tomorrow. The current program has a combination of 15-LOVE Excellence participants, along with students from both Albany and Schenectady High Schools.

Maxine will also focus on 15-LOVE's College Prep Program. The purpose of the College Prep Program is to promote student success and post-secondary education, from college awareness to college readiness, through academics, career exploration, civic engagement, college life and leadership development. Maxine's goal is to encourage each teen to see the connection between college and career. Currently, each teen will participate in the *Reach for College* curriculum. The complete structured curriculum will help each student learn about the benefits of higher education and what skills they need to be employable.

We are thrilled to welcome Maxine to 15-LOVE and are excited with her plans to help enhance our Leadership and College Prep Programs.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I have been amazed by the generosity of strangers all my life. I have a vivid memory of sitting in a pew at church as a young child and watching the woman in front of me help the elderly man in front of her who was struggling to get his jacket on. She did it without even looking up from her music or missing a note of the hymn – it was seemingly just an automatic reaction. It was a simple gesture that for some reason stuck with me. I don't get to watch television much, but I've caught a commercial that shows a string of people watching others performing a good deed, then "paying it forward" with their own good deed. I don't know what the commercial is for, but I know I like the concept. Last Spring, Joel Clair contacted me about volunteering given his pending retirement. He has since created and implemented an SAT Prep Program, where he meets with students weekly and is in our office up to 3 afternoons per week for these meetings. His son had volunteered with us on the tennis courts, but he was otherwise a "stranger" and has made a huge impact. You'll read about two other volunteers in this newsletter, Tess and Neema, who were both "strangers" who found us and have become such integral parts of our program in different ways – one on the tennis courts, and one with the third grade literacy program at Giffen Elementary School, called the Book Power Club. In fact, the Book Power Clubs that run at Giffen and Arbor Hill Elementary Schools are entirely dependent on volunteers who give up an afternoon each week to work with kids on literacy skills. About 8 years ago, a stranger named Devan DalCol contacted us to begin volunteering, and became so engrained in the program that she eventually worked for us, convinced her mother, sister and brother to all start volunteering both in the Book Clubs and on the tennis courts, and when she went off to college at Georgetown, she started a program there similar to 15-LOVE.



The generosity of strangers has made 15-LOVE stronger and helped us to grow. Our Board recently added *giving back to the community* as an operating theme of our mission statement. Our Excellence (tournament team) participants are required to do at least 20 hours of service each year, and we will be doing more community service in the years to come as our leadership program grows. Personally, I volunteer my time to teach first aid and CPR at the American Red Cross. Our board members are constantly in our office and after spending time directly with our kids, I hope that the kids in our program see that, see the generosity of so many "strangers," and decide to find ways in their own lives to give to their communities. We work on developing so many facets of our children – physical, emotional, healthy lifestyle, education, life skills, money management, taking care of the environment, even internet safety, among other things and this is just one more way we can help them develop into our leaders of tomorrow. We are proud of our graduates and want them to go out into the world and make a difference. It's important that they have good role models to encourage them to do that, and I am happy to report that there is no lack of positive role models in 15-LOVE, of people "spreading the love" as we like to say. And, we greatly appreciate it. Thank you!

With kind regards,

Amber Marino

Amber Marino

15-LOVE Volunteer Q&A

TESS PALLADINO

Tess Palladino is currently a junior at Albany Academy for Girls. Tess has volunteered with the 15-LOVE Program for the past 3 years at the Book Power Club at Giffen Elementary.

How did you get involved with the 15-LOVE Program?

TESS: I had heard about the program through a friend who had volunteered with 15-LOVE as well. I immediately fell in love with the program and volunteering in general.

Who do you think it's so important to be a volunteer in our community?

TESS: I think giving back is critical for anyone that is capable. It's incredible how many people need assistance just in this area alone, and every helping hand counts. I think it's important to instill not just the need, but the want to volunteer at a young age.

What advice would you give to high school students who are hesitant about volunteering?

TESS: Bring a friend! It is always easier to do something out of your comfort zone with a friend by your side. There is also nothing to be nervous about because kids will love anyone who spends time with them and smiles.

How has volunteering with 15-LOVE shaped you as a person?

TESS: Learning from a young age that the commitments you make are extremely important, and the value of time management helped me become the person I am today. I learned how important it is to follow through with your commitments, because I dedicated once a week to volunteering. I also learned how to manage my time, which proved to be very helpful once I started high school. I know that I have book club every week, and I have to account for that when getting homework and other extracurricular activities.

You've been able to involve your school a little bit in helping 15-LOVE, tell us about that.

TESS: I organized a book drive to donate to 15-LOVE when I was in the eighth grade. I raised approximately 400 books that are still being distributed to children in the 15-LOVE Program. I've also reached out to teachers and faculty more recently and received hundreds of books to donate as well.



What are the benefits that you see for the students at Giffen with 15-LOVE having the Book Power Club available to them?

TESS: The kids are excited to come to book club every week. They learn to associate reading and learning with fun and excitement through these book clubs. Having different people from the community show them how important reading and learning truly are, but fun too, is also important. It's such a great feeling when I see first hand the improvement in their reading by the end of the school year. I have never met a child who hasn't learned something new or improved in any way in my three years of volunteering.

Each book club has an educational theme, what in your opinion has been the most helpful for the kids?

TESS: Recently we taught them a little about geography, and I was amazed at how much they hadn't been exposed to. Showing them that there is so much more in the world than just their community was unbelievably rewarding.

What had been the most fun experience you've had being a 15-LOVE volunteer?

TESS: I love seeing the kids faces when they receive their own book to take home. Letting them pick their own book definitely gets them even more excited about reading. Their excitement makes my time spent with them worth it.

What's the best piece of advice you could give to one of the 15-LOVE kids?

TESS: Most of the kids that I've met are excited about learning and all have career aspirations in mind. My advice would be the same for all children, which is to try new things constantly because you never know what you're going to enjoy. Find something that you're passionate about and stick with it.

15-LOVE Volunteer STORY

*“In tennis, love means nothing,
but at 15-LOVE, love is everything”*



By Neema Moghadam,
*University at Albany student
and 15-LOVE volunteer*



Since October of 2009, I have volunteered over 400 hours with 15-LOVE. I was looking for a way to give back to the community while living in Albany and attending the University at Albany, and one day I came across 15-LOVE. Through 15-LOVE, I've been able to combine my passion for teaching tennis with my passion for helping others. During the summers, I run my own tennis camp in Rockland County, but while I'm in Albany I put my business on pause and devote my time to the kids of the Capital Region.

This year, I've been working very closely with 15-LOVE Program Director, Domingo Montes, in order to expand 15-LOVE's impact on after school site visits. I visit several sites per week independently in addition to coaching alongside Domingo. My favorite site is the Troy Boys and Girls Club because the way the little children listen attentively, look up to me, and thank me after every lesson, it gives me this amazing feeling that I truly am making a difference. I am so blessed that I can contribute to such an amazing mission that 15-LOVE strives towards every day. The credit needs to be given to the kids who put in the hard work and commit their time to bettering themselves as both an athlete and a contributor to society.

In addition to volunteering my time teaching tennis, I wanted to give back to 15-LOVE in other ways. At UAlbany I am currently

President of ABLE (Albany Business Leaders Emerging). We are a group of 150 students who share a passion for professional development and community service.

For the past year, ABLE members have been volunteering with 15-LOVE's Book Power Club at Giffen Elementary School every Thursday. I truly believe all it takes is for a club member to volunteer once and they immediately become hooked to the charm of these third graders.

When I'm not volunteering for 15-LOVE, I work diligently towards maintaining a 3.82 GPA and earning a B.S. in Business Administration and a B.A. in Economics and plan to graduate in 2012. I also hold multiple leadership positions on UAlbany's campus including; President of both ABLE (as mentioned previously) and the Dean's Leadership Council.

I am going to be an active contributor to the 15-LOVE program forever. I believe in the mission and because I can see the tremendous impact that 15-LOVE has on a daily basis, I will remain an avid supporter.

SUMMER PROGRAM SOON UNDERWAY

15-LOVE's summer program will kick off on Monday, June 27 and will run until Thursday, August 11. We will be at 11 parks throughout Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer and Troy and serving numerous community camps. Check out our website for a full list of times and locations!

Look for updates in the Fall 2011 newsletter on the success of our upcoming summer program!

15-LOVE IS THE GOOD LUCK CHARM FOR THE SIENA SAINTS!



15-LOVE participants show off their new Siena hats.

Special thanks to Board Member John Nigro who treated over 40 15-LOVE participants and family members to delicious pizza from Inferno's and a Siena basketball game at the Times Union Center on January 30. The 15-LOVE participants cheered on the Siena Saints as they beat Niagara University 61-59.

Thanks to the Siena College Athletic Department, all the 15-LOVE participants were given free Siena hats!

WINTER ALUMNI GATHERING



L-R Top Row: Executive Director Amber Marino, Maryam Mair, Khadijah Peek, Marjana (Mair) Bidwell, Sameer Modasra, Clinton Mathai & Vishnu Najaraj **L-R Bottom Row:** Asia Peek, Isreal Powell, Andrea Carrillo, Francesca Moloney & Christina Moloney

On January 6, 15-LOVE welcomed a group of alumni back for our winter alumni night. The group enjoyed a night of dinner and catching up. Since many of our alumni are no longer in the area, it gave some of them an opportunity to see 15-LOVE's new home.

Alumni night is a tradition each year during the holiday break. We are working on creating more events for our alumni like volunteer days, alumni and current participant outings and much more.

ALUMNI NEWS

15-LOVE alumni are always on the move so we wanted to keep you updated on what some of our past participants are doing.

Nino Alivodic has become a member of 15-LOVE's Board of Directors. Nino is a graduate of Siena College and currently works as an Auditor for PricewaterhouseCoopers in Albany.

Marjana Mair Bidwell was serving in Baghdad from April 2009 – April 2010. She then moved to Ft. Hauchuca in Arizona and has recently been transferred to Ft. Drum in Watertown, NY. Marjana was married to John Bidwell this past January.

Andrea Carrillo is entering her junior year at SUNY New Paltz and this summer plans to study Graphic Design in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Jake Kunhe is entering his senior year at Temple University and this summer is completing an internship in Hollywood, California focusing on film.

Sugam Langer has become a member of 15-LOVE's Board of Directors. Sugam is a graduate of Siena College and Syracuse University College of Law. Sugam is a lawyer at Harris Beach, PLLC in Albany.

Clinton Mathai will be entering his sophomore year at RPI and this summer will be working with 40 other students at Albany Medical College doing extensive medical research. Clinton was chosen from a large pool of applicants.

'LIKE' 15-LOVE ON FACEBOOK!



See the happenings of 15-LOVE, check up on upcoming events and enjoy pictures from participant outings and so much more!

It's simple, simply type in *15-Love* in the search box and look for the one that says Non-Profit Organization. Once you double click on that link, our page will appear. At the top of the page you'll see the like button and just click on it!

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19TH ANNUAL FORE LOVE & MONEY

MONDAY JUNE 13, 2011

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