

## SquashScholars News Letter

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February 14, 2008

### **Saluting our Partners – The University of Minnesota**

The presence of an automatic ball on the squash courts with our SquashScholars may seem a strange way to celebrate our partnership with “the University”. But this picture does in fact embody the commitment of University people and resources that have nurtured and supported our program from the beginning. And the beginning means long before program operation began in October of 2007.

The first steps were taken by James Turman, head of Recreational Sports, and Vinh Chung, director of the Recreation Center facility, in the fall of 2006 committing to rent-free use of the squash courts at the Rec Center. A classroom in the aquatic center came next. Brandi Hoffman, Kinesiology coordinator of Physical Education classes and Tony Brown, Associate Director of the Recreational Sports Department jointly funded the purchase of the “SquashCannon” for PE squash classes and use by the Squash Club and U squash community. Making it available to SquashScholars was a natural extension.



We have been working with Todd Tratz, director of Youth Programs within the Rec Sports Dept. to formalize SquashScholars as a certified Youth Program. Jean Strommer at the Center for Multicultural Academic excellence has been invaluable in finding and training tutors for our academic program. She and Tex Ostvig have been finding opportunities for free educational field trips. The tutors, though paid via a work study program, bring the passion and dedication of committed volunteers to our mission. (One tutor, Eric Grauvilardell, is strictly a volunteer.)

Cathy Jordan in the Children, Youth, and Family Consortium was an instrumental advisor in preparing our successful grant proposal to General Mills Foundation. Brad Hunt and the entire Rec Sports publicity department have produced great promotional materials and a team uniform design that help spread the SquashScholars story. And last but certainly not least, University Squash Club members have already provided, in just a few short months, close to 150 hours of volunteer service. Most of that time has been on court coaching, where their enthusiasm and love of the game is readily transmitted and absorbed by our students. But they have also helped with driving students on the weekends and various backroom tasks like publicity and web site development. **A huge thank you to the University community!**



## **Shoe Day Arrives**

Procuring our team uniforms has been a hit and miss process from the beginning. The T-shirts with team insignia came in November. New matching court shoes have just arrived. With new recruits, we will be ordering more shoes shortly. Team shorts and warm up jackets will be coming next month. We should be all set by our first tournament action.



## **New Semester Start up January 14**

SquashScholars welcomed students back from the holiday break on January 14. Of the nine Sullivan students who finished the first semester, unfortunately three have left the program, with six remaining. However, with expansion of the Beacons program over their fall numbers and space available in SquashScholars, we have added six new students to our program with one more pending. Our goal for this year has been to serve 12 – 15 students, so we are now on target. Our core holdovers from the fall now have the opportunity to lead the newcomers by example both in the classroom and on the court. The picture below captures ten students along with tutors Khadijo Ismail and Nadhia Fuentes in the back left and Saturday coaches Geoff Hart, back center, Getiria Onsongo, back right, and Chris Kauffman, front center.



## **Volunteer Opportunity**

On Saturday afternoons, when our program runs from 2:00 to 4:00, we ask our families to provide their own transportation from home to the University Recreation Center as there are no school buses running. However, most of our families do not have a consistent transportation option, especially in the winter months, so we are offering a ride to any of our students that need one. Until now, the coaches have been doing this, but we are expanding to 12-13 students this term and we need the coaches at the Rec Center ahead of time.

There are several options for helping with this task:

- Pick up one, two, or three student(s), around 1:30, park and stay at the Rec until 4:00, take same student(s) home. All of our students are on the South side within 15 minutes of the campus. Having at least a couple volunteers in this category would be helpful for bathroom breaks, taking photos, and just being there if a student needs a break off the court.
- Same as above but not staying at the Rec between 2:00 and 4:00, rather dropping off and picking up.
- Driving one way, before or after but not both, where doing the before part is somewhat higher priority.
- Special event Saturdays may have different hours.
- Anyone is welcome to do a one-time shot, once-a-month, every week, or something in between.
- We do not need all volunteers every week. Roughly 3 - 4 needed per week.
- If you have some racquet skills and would like to get on the court with the students, that can be arranged!

We also need drivers on Wednesday, Feb. 27, family night at Sullivan School, from 4:30 to 7:00.

**Please contact John Stever at 612-242-3224 to volunteer. Thank you!**

### **Start the new Tax Year with a Gift**

The 2007 tax year is history. SquashScholars has been extremely careful with the financial gifts received this fiscal year, but still remain several thousand dollars short of meeting known commitments for 2007/2008. SquashScholars does and will always rely on the generosity of individual donors. You can help by printing just this page, completing the information below and returning it with your contribution to:

SquashScholars  
111 Marquette Ave. Suite 1407  
Minneapolis, MN 55401-2030

I would like to help SquashScholars students reach their potential with my gift of:

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Please consider applying for a matching grant through your employer.

SquashScholars is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your gift is fully deductible.

**Thank you for your generosity!**