



## 15-LOVE Embarks on Tennis Court Project in Schenectady at Michigan Avenue Park



The tennis courts at Michigan Avenue Park used to be 15-LOVE's largest site in the City of Schenectady. Unfortunately, the courts were in significant disrepair and virtually unplayable. The courts became a liability to the City of Schenectady and were devaluing the property values of the homes in the immediate Mont Pleasant neighborhood. The trees that lined the tennis courts dropped black chestnuts and other tree debris, and the acidity from those droppings had eaten away at the surface of the courts leaving a black sludge, rendering the courts unsafe. In addition, there were cracks on all the courts, some so large that a small child's foot could become lodged in the crack if they stepped the wrong way.

The location is accessible to low-income families and therefore ideal in helping 15-LOVE fulfill its mission of reaching "at risk" youth. The site was once vibrant, with many 15-LOVE participants, but attendance has recently dropped off, meaning fewer kids are receiving the free tennis and educational programming 15-LOVE provides. We estimate that by revitalizing these ten tennis courts, 200 new youth participants will become involved, representing a 100% increase in attendance at this site. 15-LOVE currently serves approximately 1,400 youth in Schenectady County annually. By revitalizing the tennis courts at Michigan Avenue, the opportunities 15-LOVE provides will be open to more residents in the City of Schenectady, especially the Hamilton Hill and Mont Pleasant neighborhoods.

The United States Tennis Association (USTA) recently changed the rules for tennis for kids ages 10 and under. They

now must play on shorter courts, with shorter rackets and different tennis balls (beginning with larger foam balls, then pressureless balls, and finally regulation balls). Due to these rule changes, the existing ten tennis courts at Michigan Avenue have been transformed into eight regular tennis courts (78'), all with blended (60') lines for kids 10 and under. In addition, six permanent 36' courts for younger and beginner kids were created in place of the two remaining regular courts.

These new courts will be the first courts of their kind in the Greater Capital Region and will be a drawing point for many families with younger children. The benefits to the City of Schenectady as a whole are great. The area will become a source of pride in Schenectady and draw people from around the region for weekly TeamTennis matches and possibly for small tournaments.

Ground broke on this exciting project this past July, and contractors have worked continuously throughout the Fall to complete the project. Courts were officially finished on November 12. At 15-LOVE we are excited to begin programming on the new courts in spring 2013.

### INSIDE

- Michigan Avenue Project..... 1**
- Executive Director News..... 2**
- Summer VISTA's..... 3**
- Alumni Story..... 4**
- Children's Literacy Fair..... 5**
- Fore Love & Money..... 6**



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I believe in last year's Fall Newsletter, I began by telling you that we were just beginning to recover from all the happenings of our summer. I had no idea that the summer of 2012 would make 2011 seem like a cake walk. The truth is that this Fall, it hasn't slowed down. Our summer projects have continued. We kept moving with our general program, seeing over 1,900 participants for free tennis and life skills. Once again, we dedicated an instructor to travel out to all of our sites to distribute free books to those participants to encourage summer reading. Once again, we held a Healthy Grilling Night in a tent in our parking lot that culminated a summer focused on healthy living and again featured healthy tips and recipes distributed weekly.

However, this summer, we ran a brand-new gardening program! With the help of our new partnership with Siena College's AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) Program, which you will read more about in this newsletter, we worked with a different group of kids each of 3 days per week on gardening, healthy cooking, gardening crafts and educational games. Our garden was gorgeous and I could not have been more proud of the kids who took such pride in the vegetables they were growing. We got a relatively late start to our garden – it was just built this spring – but it flourished greater than we ever could have imagined. We planted a “pizza” garden, with amazing tomatoes, in many varieties, peppers, onions, eggplant, and herbs. This fall, we had an amazing pizza party with sauce made exclusively from ingredients in our garden. Our kids took vegetables home to their families all summer – they learned the joy of

eating cherry tomatoes off the vine, and were amazed at the speed the onions sprouted. They “fought” over peppers, eggplant and okra. We also held our first book giveaway program which was a incredible success.

Our Little d Award sponsored a summer Literacy Fair on a Saturday in July at The College of Saint Rose, which was a great success, honoring Tom Angleberger for *The Strange Case of Origami*. Finally, we still had our summer-ending Jamboree, seeing nearly 400 kids while fighting off the rain, and handing out school supplies and t-shirts to every one of them.

On top of all of that, we worked with the City of Schenectady, USTA, Copeland Coating, HMA Contracting and AFSCO Fencing, to completely reconstruct 10 tennis courts at Michigan Avenue Park in Schenectady, which you read more about on page 1. This is a project unlike any other 15-LOVE has ever undertaken, and it has been a great joy to our program and the City of Schenectady. We have worked tirelessly to raise the necessary funds and coordinate the efforts (with the help of Nigro Companies).

Unfortunately, it was only a few days before our book giveaway, that our beloved and devoted Board Member, Ron Kohn, passed away suddenly. We were shocked and deeply saddened. Ron brought great life and fun to our Board, along with his immense expertise in the field of accounting and auditing, which has strengthened not only our financial reporting, but our cohesiveness as a Board. He took time to work with our

participants, and took time to check in with our staff. He shared pieces of his life, and shared his great zest for life. I couldn't help but think that he had something to do with the success of that event in his beloved City of Albany. We miss him dearly.

So, I sit here on my couch, typing away, humbled by what I have been able to witness and be a part of this summer. I am ever thankful for the support we have received from you, our friends, and once again, I must ask you for one more thing. If you have any used children's books, or would like to donate new books, or a monetary donation so that we can purchase new books through FirstBook (at a rate of \$.45 each), we can certainly use them. I wish you all could have seen the look on the kids' faces when I would ask what they were interested in, and somehow find a book for them. One little boy loved Toy Story, and when I handed him a Toy Story book that I read to my own little boys and saw his face light up as he turned excitedly to his mother, jumping up and down, to show it to her, my eyes welled up. It was the first book he ever owned.

With kind regards,

*Amber Marino*  
Amber Marino



# SUMMER VISTA's

## join the 15-LOVE Staff

By: Retina Bethea – 2012 Summer VISTA

My name is Retina Bethea and I'm a graduate student in the Athletic Administration Program at SUNY Brockport. This past summer I had the privilege of being placed, for my second summer of service for AmeriCorps, at 15-LOVE. The experience was phenomenal. I served as Project Coordinator for 15-LOVE's healthy living initiative. I worked very closely with the 15-LOVE staff and fellow AmeriCorps member Evelina, a current student at Siena College. Together we helped kick start 15-LOVE's Healthy Living and Gardening Program. It was truly a learning experience, I did not know much about gardening prior to working in the program, however, I learned a great deal in a short time and really embraced the program. We created a weekly program for kids to come in and help care and plant in the new 15-LOVE gardens. Numerous vegetables were grown. From the vegetables we were growing in the garden we focused the healthy living portion of the program around MyPlate, also formerly known as My Pyramid. MyPlate is the current nutrition guide published by the United States Department of Agriculture, depicting a place setting with a plate and glass divided into five food groups. It replaced the USDA's MyPyramid guide, ending 19 years of USDA food pyramid diagrams. MyPlate will be displayed on food packaging and used in nutrition education in the United States.

The participants reaction to some of the locally grown, in season produce we tried using in healthy recipes was hilarious. I also enjoyed teaching the participants about the major food groups and informing them how they can incorporate them into their daily lives. It was very rewarding to learn that they actually looked forward to attending our program. I would see them at other events hosted by 15-LOVE throughout the summer and they would ask questions such as, "Are we making anything this week?" and "What food group are we focusing on?" The participants really enjoyed being in the garden and were eager to water it every day.

I love what 15-LOVE stands for. It unites families all throughout the Capital Region and it provides them with fun recreational activities, such as the jamboree, healthy grilling night and the literacy fair. I was graced with the opportunity to work for an organization that shares the same social responsibility that I do. I really enjoyed my time at 15-LOVE and I felt as if I was making a positive influence on the Capital Region inner city youth. I also met some great people along the way and experienced one of my best summers ever.



Lima James, Retina Bethea and Executive Director, Amber Marino

By: Lima James – 2012 Summer VISTA

My internship at 15-LOVE, as the Project Coordinator for the Summer Literacy Program, was truly a memorable one. The 15-LOVE office, and its' members, were very warm and welcoming. One of the most important things I learned at 15-LOVE was that creating a comfortable, fun, and open environment at the workplace, lets one really enjoy their work and love what they do.

As the Project Coordinator I helped streamline the distribution process and organization method of the books that were in the 15-LOVE book room. In addition, I looked for sources of additional new and used books and book donations by the local community. To promote book donations and volunteer work, I created many flyers which were posted on local community bulletin boards to bring more awareness to the programs conducted by 15-LOVE. By the end of the internship, I was able to collect over 500 books to use for our free book giveaway program. As Project Coordinator, I was also responsible for assisting with planning events such as the Children's Literacy Fair. I had a lot of fun creating invitation letters, flyers, and posters for the event. Although calling vendors and organizations was a very challenging task, I am pleased to say that with persistence, anything is possible. I was able to get through to the Music Mobile and have them participate in the event after several tries, and that really felt like an accomplishment. Towards the end of the internship, as my last task, I created a brochure and flyer about the Denise McCoy Legacy Award for the National Book Festival held in Washington, D.C. My passion for youth literacy and education in general is what led me to enjoy the work I was doing even more.

I am very glad that I was placed at 15-LOVE as an intern through the AmeriCorps VISTA, Siena College Summer Service Scholar program. The internship with 15-LOVE was a great start to my Master's in Social Welfare Program, which started this Fall. I am very thankful for all the great experiences and memories I've made through this opportunity. And I look forward to working with 15-LOVE again in the very near future.

**15 LOVE**   
**Giving Kids The Advantage**

# 15-LOVE ALUMNI STORY



*By: Israel Diaz Powell*

As a kid growing up in Troy, NY, I was the youngest in my family, so this led to me hanging with my older siblings, who soon went off to school. This left me home

alone, trying to figure out high school on my own. I joined the 15-LOVE Program in the summer before my sophomore year of high school and they were the big brothers and sisters that helped me through the rough years of being a teen. My enthusiasm for the program and tennis was rewarded when I was invited to join the Excellence Program.

15-LOVE was more than just playing tennis, it instilled values and relationships that helped mold me into the individual I am today. My earliest memories of the program were the kind hearted attitudes of all the coaches. They were constantly encouraging me to try my best and work hard, whether they knew it or not they were mentoring me into being a strong person. After my first summer with the program, I was recommended for the Excellence Program, this part of the program reinforced the family nature of 15-LOVE. Some of my best friends were the kids I grew up with during these times. To this day I stay in contact with everyone in my age group.

It was no surprise that my first summer back from college, I immediately signed up to be an instructor in hopes to become a mentor myself. Through instruction I truly began to understand the philosophy of 15-LOVE. As a program modeled similar to that of Arthur Ashes programs with the motto "use tennis to teach the game of life," I can see how lives and the world can be changed for the positive.

Looking back it has been 7 years since I joined 15-LOVE and it has made a great impact in my life. Whether it was through the off courts as a camper, which taught everything from money management to gang prevention, or the leadership responsibilities I had as a site instructor. These many skills were a necessity for my success.

Currently I am heading into to my last semester at RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology) to earn a degree in Chemical Engineering. A month after graduation, I will start my tenure at General Electric (GE) taking part in their Operations Management Leadership program (OMLP). This doorway of opportunity was opened through many of my qualities that were gained from my time with 15-LOVE. To this day, I know I can walk into the 15-LOVE office and know I am with family.

## Participants Travel to Yale University for Tennis Tournament

*By: Clinton Mathai*

Every year I look forward to the Connecticut tournament at Yale, not so much for the tennis playing, but more for the time I spend with the crazy 15-LOVE kids. I first became a chaperone for the tournament three years ago and we immediately started a tradition that has continued to this day. On the first day of the tournament, instead of going out into the town for dinner, a big group of the participants stay back at the hotel and order Chinese food and have a large sit down dinner. Each year we talk and joke around for hours, however this year one of our teammates did not have his food. As a team the kids decided to not eat until their teammate had his food as well. I had never seen such a dedication to a team member. I was truly astonished because the kids had spent the entire day in the sun playing tennis and most of them did not have the time to get lunch due to the tight tennis schedule of the tournament. The next day was even tougher than the rest, almost all of the participants had matches and at end of the day they all participated in a high intensity tennis clinic given by the IMG Bollettieri Academy. Even though the kids were exhausted from an entire day's worth of play they persevered through a tough tennis clinic. All of the participants did well and several even won trophies for their respective achievements in their age groups. As a former participant and now chaperone, this was the first trip I was able to learn and observe attributes of the group. I was able to witness their commitment to their teammates, as well as their determination and diligence to grow not only as people, but as tennis players.



### 15-LOVE Says Goodbye to Beloved Board Member Ronald Kohn

*On September 21, 2012 15-LOVE was saddened by the sudden loss of board member Ronald Kohn. Ron had been part of the 15-LOVE family for the past three years and was instrumental in 15-LOVE's Finance and Development Committees. Ron was an active tennis player who loved the game. Each year he participated at 15-LOVE's annual Fore Love & Money event, as one of the few men on the tennis courts in the morning, not shying away from playing against the women. Ron became a known fixture around 15-LOVE, as he was around the Albany area. When we heard that he was known as "Albany Ron," we were not surprised. When he walked into the 15-LOVE office he always had a smile on his face and asked everyone how they were doing. We are deeply honored to have had Ron dedicate his time and expertise to the 15-LOVE board. Ron will forever remain a part of the 15-LOVE family.*

## The Denise McCoy Legacy Award Committee Hosts Literacy Fair

On an absolutely beautiful summer day on July 21, the Denise McCoy Legacy Award Committee, the 15-LOVE staff, and volunteers, hosted the **Capital Region Kid's Literacy Fair** at The College of Saint Rose. The event featured this year's winner of the



*Tom Angleberger signs books for local kids.*

Denise McCoy Legacy Award, author Tom Angleberger, for his book *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda*. Mr. Angleberger was absolutely fantastic! He met with each and every child that attended the fair and made them all feel very special. His books were available for sale and he happily signed all his books for the kids. In addition to Tom's books, we had a table filled of free books so those who attended could walk away with a book of their choice.

The event was free and open to the entire community. Special thanks to this year's sponsors, the Albany Times Union and Fenimore Asset Management, as well as the many generous individual donors. The fair featured several other fun and educational activities such as: the Music Mobile, Jim Snack the Magician, ShopRite nutrition based projects, face painting, make your own bookmark with the Albany Tulip Queen and fun tennis games by 15-LOVE. Goodies were donated by TCBY and Freihofer's for all to enjoy.

There are not many affordable family activities provided locally and we were proud to sponsor a free literacy fair to members of our community. The families that participated stayed throughout the day and engaged in the activities that were available to them. Tom received the official Denise McCoy Legacy Award later that evening, at a cocktail reception at Yono's Restaurant in Albany. Tom impressed the crowd with his thank you speech and stated that after today's event he could see how the mission of the Denise McCoy Legacy Award truly impacts today's youth and encourages them to read. Before finishing his speech, Tom generously

donated his prize earnings back to the committee. The committee will donate the \$1,000 to the Denise McCoy Scholarship Program.

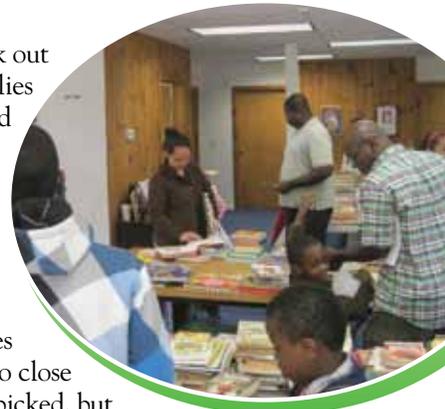


*Local community enjoys activities at Literacy Fair.*

## 15-LOVE Opens Doors to Albany Community for Free Book Giveaway

On September 26, a school break day for Albany students, 15-LOVE held the first of many planned book giveaway programs. We opened our doors to the children and families in the Albany City School District to come and take free, used children's books. Thanks to the School District for allowing us to send home flyers to the kids, we were overwhelmed with over 250 people walking through our doors that day. At least three times, we heard parents talk about how wonderful this opportunity was because their kids' teachers want them to read a book every night, but they didn't have any books in their homes.

In addition to getting to pick out free books, we encouraged families to walk through our gardens and pick fresh herbs and vegetables to take home. Two of our Excellence participants who had worked in the garden all summer, shepherded families through the garden, teaching them how to pick the vegetables and herbs. Eventually, we had to close the garden because it was over-picked, but not without hearing a grandmother say to a mother that she had never cooked with anything fresh before.



We were thrilled with the success of this event and plan to host another free book giveaway this spring.

### Denise McCoy SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

*In 2004, the 15-LOVE Program established a scholarship fund in the memory of Denise McCoy. Denise was a long-time supporter of 15-LOVE, particularly portions of the program relating to education. 15-LOVE and Denise share a passion for education and belief that anyone with the desire to attend an institution of higher education should be able to find resources available to help make that happen.*

*Each year, 15-LOVE seeks to award scholarships to deserving students who have participated in the 15-LOVE Program. To date over 25 participants have been awarded this scholarship to help lift some financial burden off them during their 4 years of college. In 2012, 15-LOVE awarded the scholarship to two deserving participants. Abhishek Paul graduated from Guilderland High School and is currently attending Binghamton University majoring in Bio Engineering. The second recipient, Ian Castle, graduated from Columbia High School and is currently attending Clarkson University majoring in Engineering and Management.*

*We congratulate Abhishek and Ian and wish them continued success in their future endeavors.*

**CAPITAL REGION YOUTH  
TENNIS FOUNDATION**



785 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206  
518-438-2039

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
ALBANY, NY  
PERMIT #370

**CAPITAL REGION YOUTH  
TENNIS FOUNDATION**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Herbert L. Shultz, Jr.**  
*President*

**Robert A. Schmitz**  
*Vice President*

**Daniel M. Sleasman**  
*Secretary*

**C. Anthony Owens**  
*Treasurer*

Nino Alivodic	Sugam Langer
Thomas Amell	Meg MacClarence
Ryan Artis	Warren Mackey
Lynn Derry	John J. Nigro
Maxine Fantroy-Ford	G. Thomas Selfridge
Philip Fields	Nitty Singh
Nuhar Jaleel	Anne Tribble
Maureen Klein	Barbara Yake
Mary Jean Krackeler	

**Staff**

Amber Marino, Executive Director  
Katie Genovese, Development Director  
Domingo Montes, Program Director  
Maxine Brisport, Education Director

*20<sup>th</sup> Annual*

**Fore Love & Money Event**

This year 15-LOVE celebrated the 20th Anniversary of Fore Love & Money, a golf and tennis outing, that helps support the 15-LOVE Program. We had another year of beautiful weather, lots of laughs and great company. This year our Fore Love & Money event raised over \$80,000 making it yet another great success!

Over the years, we have seen this event successfully grow, which could not have been possible without those who participated and the support of our generous corporate sponsors. Our sponsors for the event included: Gold: Nigro Companies; Silver: Fenimore Asset Management, Times Union and Tri-City Rentals; Bronze: Albany Medical Center, Albany Valve & Fitting, Berkshire Bank, Bouchey Financial Group, CDPHP, First Niagara, Kasselmann Electric Co., Inc., KeyBank, Krackeler Scientific Inc., M&T Bank, Picotte Companies, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Siena College, St. Peter's Health Partners, Stuyvesant Plaza and Whiteman Osterman & Hanna. Also, we would like to thank our cart sponsor Omni Development Co., Inc. and our lunch sponsors John & Margaret Malicki.

Thank you for all of your support of this amazing event and we look forward to the 21st annual Fore Love & Money event in June 2013!

