

# THE BRONX BOAST

A Publication of CitySquash, Inc.

An Urban Youth Enrichment Program

Fall/Winter 2004

## NATIONAL CHAMPS!



CitySquashers show off their trophies at Groton School. Maylin Colon (center, in white) won the U13 girls division, Tanesha Jackson (center, in black) won the U15 division, and Prince Mensah (not pictured) won the U13 boys title.

### 2nd Urban Championships Bring Happy End to Successful Year

By Thomas Thumb

Groton, MA – It was a storybook ending to a storybook year. Along with seven parent chaperones, three staff members, and junior national champion Lily Lorentzen, a volunteer, all twenty-three CitySquashers traveled to Massachusetts for the 2nd National Urban Individual Championships the weekend of June 12. Hosted again at Groton, the scenic boarding school that boasts one of the country's finest squash facilities, the event brought together 140 players from four of the country's inner-city squash programs. CitySquashers had a terrific time and could hardly have performed better, capping off a season that by all accounts was even more successful than its first.

The Bronx-based program entered players in four divisions and won three of them. Tanesha Jackson, last year's U13 Girls winner, defeated StreetSquash's Sheena Suckoo in four games to take home the U15 winner's trophy, and Maylin Colon did not lose a game on her way to the U13 title, beating SquashBuster Ashley Brooks in the final.

CitySquashers' prowess on court was perhaps most apparent in the U13 Boys division. All four semifinalists hailed from the Bronx, with sixth grader Prince Mensah capturing the title with a win over classmate Willie Gonzalez in the final. Steven Barrera, a seventh grader, defeated his sixth grade teammate Freddy Hernandez for third place.

Other CitySquashers brought hardware home as well. Ary Gimenez earned fifth place in the U15 Boys draw. Jesse Pacheco and Rochell Hudson finished third and sixth respectively in the Girls U13's. Katrina Intal defeated SquashBuster Ana Lopez for the U13 Consolation Plate title. And Bogar Avila, after going down 0-2 in games against SquashBuster Serge Saint-Vil in the final of the U13 Boys Consolation Plate, rallied to win in an emotional and exhausting five games.

The team had a lot to celebrate at its year-end barbecue in June, held at the Bronxville home of David Armstrong and Ana Guerrero. CitySquash

began its second season by welcoming twelve new team members from the sixth grade to join its returning class of eleven seventh graders. Indicating that the program's popularity at Middle School 45 is growing, seventy-nine students tried out for the twelve available spots, producing a remarkably gifted and motivated class of students.

In addition, a new mentoring program was launched that matched team members with adult mentors. CitySquash's mentors and mentees have done a variety of fun activities together, from museum tours and wall climbing to weekends Upstate and trips to the movies. "The mentoring program has added a wonderfully positive new dimension to the CitySquash experience for our team members," said Tim Wyant, CitySquash's executive director. "It gives our kids a chance to develop meaningful, lasting relationships with an adult role model and in the process do a bunch of things that they probably wouldn't otherwise do."

The year also introduced CitySquash's Squash Scholarship Program, which sent as many as ten team members a week to receive free squash lessons at Westchester Squash in Mamaroneck and from world-class professionals Chris Walker and Paul Johnson in Greenwich, CT. Fifteen CitySquashers attended summer squash camps at Bowdoin, Harvard, Dartmouth, Westchester Squash, Princeton and Universal Squash.

Asked about the season, Ary Gimenez, who received the program's most prestigious award, CitySquasher of the Year, had only good things to say. "The year was cool. We had new stuff, like mentors, and took great trips. We had to work really hard, for school and for squash. We did really well."

Wyant could not have been more pleased with the program's second season. "We had an incredible year. All of the progress our team members made, as students and players, is a testament to how hardworking and talented they are. They are an amazing group of kids." CitySquash will welcome its third class of team members, all sixth graders, into the program for the 2004-2005 season, increasing its academic year enrollment to thirty students. Including its summer camp, CitySquash will work with forty-five children this year.

### In Nail-Biter, CitySquash Triumphs at Team Nationals

By William McTell

Cambridge, MA – In dramatic, anxiety producing fashion, CitySquash proved that it is the team to beat at the 1st National Urban Team Championships in Boston, winning by the narrowest of margins the only two divisions into which it had entered teams. Held at the beautiful new eight-court SquashBusters facility on the campus of Northeastern University, the two-day event brought together 120 youngsters from the country's five inner-city youth squash programs. The five-player team tournament provided an opportunity for the programs to celebrate their common mission, using squash and education to enrich the lives of children from low-income families.

Thanks to the generosity of many people at Harvard – deans, professors, tutors, and students—all twenty-three CitySquash team members, three staff persons, and seven parent chaperones were given free room and board by the University. They slept in its master's residences and dormitories, toured the campus, and ate meals with students in the dining halls.

The competition went as well for CitySquash as the team could have possibly hoped. On Sunday morning the Girls A Team was in the finals against its Harlem sister program, StreetSquash, a team that CitySquash had lost to just a month before. After falling in the first two matches at the #3 and #5 spots, it looked like the Bronx-based program would suffer the same disappointing result. Tanesha Jackson at #1 beat her opponent in four games, but on the next court at #4 Jesse Pacheco appeared outmatched. A sixth grader who had played squash for only half a year, Jesse was up against Gabriel Robinson, an eighth grader seemingly twice her size.

Although Jesse won the first two games, Gabriel came storming back, winning the third and fourth. And when Gabriel jumped to a 7-3 lead in the fifth, it looked like all hope was lost: CitySquash was two points away from defeat. But Jesse clawed her way back, even surviving a match ball at 7-8, and managed to win the fifth game 10-8 in the tiebreaker. CitySquash was still alive.

With the team match now tied at 2-all with one match to be played, Jesse and her teammates could not have had a more reliable player to count on than seventh grader Maylin Colon at #2. Seemingly unaware of the growing crowd behind her court and the pressure of playing in a title-deciding match, Maylin quickly took the lead and never looked back. After the last point, Maylin's teammates stormed the court to congratulate her and celebrate. CitySquash had won!

CitySquash's Boys A Team match in the final, also against StreetSquash, went the distance as well. Like a seesaw, CitySquash lost at #5, then won at #3; lost at #1, then won at #4. When sixth grader Prince Mensah took the court against Ramone Potter at #2, it again looked like StreetSquash had the edge: only a month earlier Ramone had beaten Prince soundly in three games.

But Prince, recently emigrated from Ghana, was on a mission. He made few errors and used his remarkable speed to neutralize Ramone's impressive shot making. Ramone became tired as the match progressed; Prince never let up. When he won the fourth game and clinched the title, Prince, like Maylin before him, was mobbed by his smiling teammates.

As impressive as the play, observers noted, was the high level of camaraderie and sportsmanship that CitySquashers displayed throughout the weekend, between one another and with their competitors. As players they rarely questioned referee calls, as spectators they clapped at the appropriate times, and as teammates they supported and coached one another. Brian Mathias, CitySquash's director of squash, was glowing all weekend long. "The squash was inspired. And the atmosphere of having all these different programs in this beautiful monument to the urban squash movement—it only made the squash better."



Summer campers Luis Alvarez, Alex Berisha and Antonio Cuesta goof around at the Heights Casino Annex in Brooklyn in July.

## HITTING THE BOOKS, GETTING RESULTS

### GPA's Continue to Improve Nearly a Third of Team in the 90's

By Rubin Carter

Bronx, NY – Proving that they bring as much enthusiasm—or at least commitment—to the classroom as they do to the squash court, CitySquashers made considerable progress as students in the 2003-2004 academic year, raising their grades, earning honors, and gaining entry into some of the New York area's most competitive summer academic programs.

Eighteen of the twenty-three team members improved their academic averages since joining the program, lifting the team average from eighty percent to eighty-four percent. The seventh graders, who have enjoyed the benefits of the program for one year longer than their sixth grade teammates, saw their class average increase an impressive six points.

There are other noteworthy statistics. While no CitySquasher had an average of ninety percent or higher before starting with the program, six did at the end of the school year. One of those students, eighth grader Edgardo Gonzalez, was named Student of the Month in January in his class at Giordano Prep, Middle School 45's most academically competitive mini school. As a result of good grades, four of the team's eleven seventh graders have been promoted to more challenging and selective mini schools within M.S. 45.

CitySquash, which provides its participants with academic tutoring and mentoring at least twice a week and has a system of incentives to encourage

academic excellence among its team members, is praised by teachers and administrators at Middle School 45. "I like the fact that there is consistency in the program," said Neil Aliberti, Assistant Principal of Middle School 45. "Through consistency, you get results." Dee Martin, a sixth grade math teacher at Middle School 45, observed that the program "motivated students to do their work."

The academic accomplishments of these racquet-wielding Bronx residents are getting noticed outside of Middle School 45 as well. Three team members spent the summer in highly selective academic enrichment programs, Summerbridge at the Riverdale Country School and the ACTION Program at Rye Country Day School.

Helping children succeed day-to-day with homework and tests is a part of the after-school program's larger effort to generate excitement about learning and prepare its team members for the future challenges of high school and college. Last year, team members spent time at many college and preparatory school campuses, including Harvard, Yale, Concordia College, Greenwich Academy, Groton School, and Fordham, where the program is based.

CitySquash's summer campers participated in a five-week literacy program that examined, among other things, the history of the Bronx and New York City. It is clear that the academic program, significantly enhanced since the hiring last year of Sarah Petrie as its director, is a help to the team members. "I got to be more organized in academics," said Angie Morales, a seventh grader. "I liked reading, and I came on Fridays for extra help. It was fun and it helped me a lot."

# Letters from Summer Camp

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An Urban Youth Enrichment Program

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Jennifer, left, Diana and Crystina hang out between matches.

## Venturing Out Into the World

To the Editor:

My favorite memory is when Jennifer and I stayed in the dormitory room together at Groton. Jesse was in the room next door, so I snuck in and surprised her. I really had a great time, and I liked the food in the cafeteria.

Angeleena Morales, 7th Grade

To the Editor:

My favorite part of CitySquash was when we went to Boston. I had to play Ramone from StreetSquash for the Team National Championships. The match went to the fourth game. I was very nervous because he had just beaten me in a match a month before. But I came out on top, winning the fourth. That was my best experience of the year.

Prince Mensah, 7th Grade

To the Editor:

My favorite part of CitySquash is going on the trips. We went to Brooklyn to the Heights Casino. It was fun. We played squash on the glass-back courts. I played against Alex, Antonio, Christina and Bentley. I beat all of them. We all got goodies. Squash is a very athletic sport, and I'm looking forward to playing it next year.

Krista Lancione, 6th Grade

To the Editor:

My favorite memory was when we went to Boston and Brian was playing his guitar. I was rapping to beats and I made all the team members laugh. That moment made me feel like I was loved.

Anneudy Saldana, 7th Grade

## Working Hard in the Classroom

To the Editor:

My favorite thing about CitySquash is doing academics at Fordham. I like it because I always have enough time to do my homework. Most of the homework I get is math. Some math problems are hard, so I get help from a volunteer. Then when I get a quiz or a test I get a good grade.

Ary Gimenez, 8th Grade

To the Editor:

The thing that I like about academics is working with volunteers. They help me on math and other things. One volunteer that I worked with was Madeline. She was very helpful to me. Our Jeopardy games were fun, too. I learned a lot about my neighborhood, about the Bronx, and about squash.

Freddy Hernandez, 7th Grade

## Off to Camp

To the Editor:

My favorite part of CitySquash this year was when I went to Harvard for a week for camp. Nick and Nash put chocolate candy on Tanesha's bed. It was so much fun. I was laughing so much. I enjoyed the week so much.

Rochell Hudson, 8th Grade

To the Editor:

Westchester Squash is the best camp. I first went with Prince for one week. During our sessions, we trained hard and we ran a lot of court sprints every morning. Every day we ordered Chinese food. After two weeks of camp, I wanted to come back to CitySquash to show my team how good I became on my forehand.

Jose Alvarez, 8th Grade

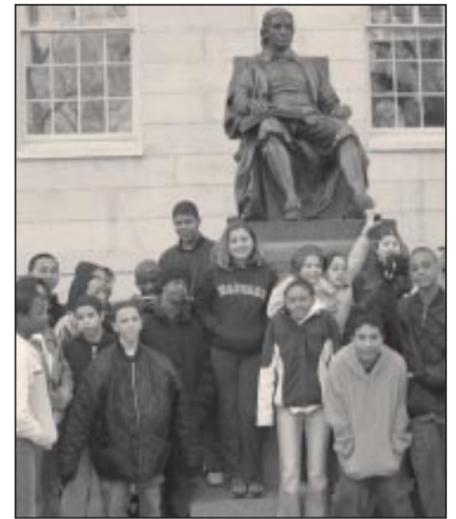
To the Editor:

I had lots of fun at Princeton Camp. I won the individual tournament we had. I had fun playing games and going to the Wawa Market. I had a blast!

Steven Barrera, 8th Grade

## New Staff Member Wins Pan Am Gold

Tepic, Mexico – CitySquash's newly appointed Director of Development & Placement Louisa Hall begins her tenure with the after-school program with yet another remarkable squash accomplishment: a gold medal. Hall, a four-time All-American at Harvard, represented the United States women's team in July at the Pan American Federation Games in Tepic, Mexico. One year ago Hall and her teammates won gold at the Pan American Games in the Dominican Republic, and they did it again in Mexico. Hall leads CitySquash's grant writing and other development efforts. She also runs CitySquash's placement program, which aims to place CitySquashers in competitive summer programs and selective high schools.



During a tour of Harvard Yard, Angie Morales grabbed the shoe of the John Harvard statue, an act believed by some to dispense good luck. The next day CitySquash won two national team titles by the narrowest of margins.



## CitySquash Needs Your Help!

Tutor	Coach
Mentor	Donate

To learn more about how you can help our team members thrive and our program grow, please contact Tim Wyant at 718-220-7400 or [tim@citysquash.org](mailto:tim@citysquash.org).

## PROGRAM EDITORIAL

# We Enter Our Third Season, in Pursuit of Excellence

It has been two years now since we welcomed our inaugural class of sixteen team members to CitySquash. That first group of kids has matured a great deal since then, and with them so has CitySquash. As we close our second season and prepare for our third, we would like to pause and reflect on the ways in which CitySquash as an organization has developed since we got off the ground.

The most obvious example is our size: we have grown. This year we will work with forty-five children, thirty in our academic year program and an additional fifteen in our summer camp. The number of opportunities and programs that we offer has also increased. In addition to academic tutoring and squash instruction, CitySquashers now have, among other things, individual mentors, access to free squash lessons from top squash professionals, and an in-house placement program to help them gain entry into competitive summer programs and selective high schools.

Philosophically, excellence is now a more central feature of our mission. This impacts the program in two main ways. First, our selection process is more competitive than it used to be. Thirty students tried out for our first class, seventy-nine students tried out last year, and we expect even more to try out this year for our third class. The organization's goal is to find kids who have the ability and the drive to be great students and great squash players.

Second, this commitment to excellence means that we have to provide our team members with additional opportunities in order for them to excel. Three of our best students attended selective academic programs this past summer. Our most dedicated squash players often got on court five days a week during the school year, and twelve of our team members attended intensive summer squash camps at places like Princeton and Dartmouth.

We are always striving to do more. This year we are launching a curriculum to supplement our ongoing academic tutoring program. We are also increasing the number of tournaments in which our players compete and expect several of them to achieve national rankings.

When Crystina, Edgardo, Nehemias and the rest of their classmates made it through tryouts and decided to join the program two years ago, they were making a big commitment: to do their best in school; to wake up early on Saturday mornings; to become active, giving members of their community; and to not just learn an unfamiliar sport, but practice it seriously and compete in it almost year-round. We were very optimistic then about what they could accomplish through CitySquash and about the exciting possibilities that lie ahead of them in life. We are even more optimistic today.

## 'The Bash' Fundraiser Draws 300 People

New York, NY —

The Bash, CitySquash's first New York City fundraiser, brought together 300 CitySquash supporters—team members, volunteers, mentors, contributors and board members, as well as people new to the program—and raised \$15,000 for the non-profit organization. The party, sponsored by Budweiser and Grey Goose Vodka, was held on Thursday, May 13 in the penthouse of Noche, a restaurant in Times Square owned by squash enthusiast David Emil.

The event gave CitySquash the opportunity to recognize those organizations that have been particularly supportive of the after-school program, including Fordham University, Middle School 45, Greenwich Academy, Westchester Squash, the Apawamis Club, Concordia College and StreetSquash. The Bash also featured a silent auction, with donated items ranging from CK Bradley formalwear to a squash lesson with superstar Jonathon Power to a copy of Bonfire of the Vanities signed by author Tom Wolfe.



After joining CitySquash, Steven Barrera often claimed that he could beat Peter Nicol. Steven retracted the statement after he met the world #1 in February and watched him win the Bear Sterns Tournament of Champions in Grand Central Terminal.

## Congratulations!

To board member Peter Briggs for his induction into the Hall of Fame of the United States Squash Racquets Association.

## Recognizing Improvement, and Celebrating It

By Sarah Petric

CitySquash's year-end awards banquet, held in Bronxville at the home of Ana Guerrero and David Armstrong, was not your typical list-of-names, fall-asleep-at-your-table awards ceremony. It was a party. After several hours of barbecue, music, basketball, and highly competitive badminton, our team members and their families gathered for the awards presentation. As director of CitySquash's academics program, I presented the Most Improved Student Award.

The winner was Rochell Hudson. As Rochell strode up to accept her trophy and shake hands with Tim, Brian and me, her teammates hooted and cheered, her parents looked on proudly, and she was beaming. She deserved it. Over the course of the year, Rochell brought her academic average up from a seventy-seven to ninety-one percent.

### 2003-2004 Awards

CitySquasher of the Year: Ary Gimenez

Academic Excellence: Katrina Intal

Most Improved Student: Rochell Hudson

Most Valuable Player: Jesse Pacheco

Most Improved Players: Anneudy Saldana and Edgardo Gonzalez

Community Service: Danel Gimenez

### Volunteers of the Year

Zoe Brunson and Justin Muzinich (2003)

Ana Guerrero and Michael Brigoli (2004)

She had a remarkable year. Eight months earlier, at the beginning of the season, it was not clear if she would make it through the end of the first quarter, let alone the whole season. She had joined the team only a few months before and did not seem to enjoy it very much. The squash was too difficult, the classroom work too boring, the staff too demanding.

In the first marking period, Rochell struggled academically, and she was suspended from the squash part of practice for a week due to low grades. Her attitude suffered as well, and we had numerous conversations with her about what she needed to do in order to stay in the program. The situation did not look promising.



CitySquash Founder and Chairman Sanford Schwartz, right, with supporters Steve Mandel, Fordham Athletic Director Frank McLaughlin, and his wife, Susan McLaughlin, at the year-end barbecue in June.

But, through her own initiative and CitySquash's close communication with her teachers, Rochell began to turn it around. With each marking period, I saw Rochell's confidence and interest in school grow. In CitySquash academic sessions she was more focused, and I had to hunt down math worksheets that would challenge her. She began to participate in school, and her teacher, Ms. Bogart, told me that she frequently called on Rochell to help other students. On the final math exam in June Rochell earned the highest grade in her class.

At about the same time that her grades started to improve, Rochell began excelling on the squash court. She even made her way onto our A team that won the Middle School Girls division in April at the National Urban Squash Team Championships in Boston. I am not sure if she loves running court sprints, but she rarely misses practice, and spends most of them with that contagious smile on her face. In July she won a scholarship to attend squash camp at Harvard.

I could tell similar stories about Rochell's teammates. To watch their progress over the past year has been incredibly gratifying. There is nothing better than seeing someone realize his or her potential, or get closer to it, knowing that you lent a hand along the way. Our mission at CitySquash is to help our team members become the best students, athletes and people they can be. It does not happen in a day, but there are moments when you know that things are moving in the right direction.

I remember one evening after practice in early winter when I walked Rochell home. On the way, she called her mother excitedly to tell her about the good grades she had received at school that day. I knew then that CitySquash had given Rochell momentum, and she was going to run with it.

*Sarah joined the CitySquash staff in the fall of 2003 as Director of Academics. Sarah was the captain of Brown University's women's squash team in 2003.*



Madeline Hauptmann, a professional tutor, helps Freddy Hernandez with his homework during an academic session at Concordia College. Madeline regularly volunteers for CitySquash

# Warning: volunteering can be addictive

By Trey Kuppin

"Squash for kids in the Bronx? But you don't play squash!" That was the reaction I got when I told my roommates that I'd be getting up at 7:30 a.m. the next morning to help with CitySquash team tryouts last October. That Saturday I rode the Metro North train to Fordham Road completely unaware of the impact the day's activities would have on me. As the kids swarmed our meeting point in front of Middle School 45, it was impossible not to be intoxicated by their enthusiasm. It was infectious and I was hooked.

On my way back to Manhattan, I tried to figure out what made CitySquash special, but found it difficult to articulate. As I continued to volunteer through the fall, I found myself planning my weekends around CitySquash. I didn't feel like a volunteer anymore; I felt like a team member—the only one who didn't know how to hit a boast, but a team member nonetheless.

What caused this transformation? Why did I feel so strongly about an organization I had known for such a short time? It was the kids. These middle school students exude remarkable warmth and enthusiasm. Watching the team at the end of year party, I realized with this team there are

no outsiders. Parents, volunteers and supporters are immediately welcomed into the group. Furthermore, I found their hunger for new experiences refreshing, whether they were participating

I was completely unaware of the impact the day would have on me.

in community service projects, visiting museums, or touring university campuses. In each case, the children relished the chance to try new things.

In addition to exposing the children to a new world, the CitySquash staff strives to instill a sense of pride in team members and teaches the children to form a support system for each other. As a result, team members have the confidence to look to each other for support and they have become a unified team focused on achieving shared goals.

Although it is an individual sport, squash is the vehicle to teach these middle school students the importance of self-confidence and the power of teamwork. As I look back over the last 11 months, I feel privileged to have played a role in their development. And now I can hit a boast.

*Trey, an equity research analyst at Banc of America, is a CitySquash volunteer and mentor. He and his mentee, Jose Alvarez, go the movies together all the time.*

## IT DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER

By Brian Mathias

At 7-3 down in the fifth game, it appeared that Jesse Pacheco's two games-to-lead had been a product of luck, attributable more to the slow start of her opponent, an eighth grader from Harlem with clear advantages in size, age, and experience, than to Jesse rising to any great occasion. But the occasion was indeed great: as a sixth grader Jesse was representing CitySquash in the final of the middle school girls division of the inaugural National Urban Squash Team Championships. Having already dropped two matches in the best-of-five series, the survival of her team's title hopes rested squarely on her young shoulders.

Two days earlier, Assistant Principal Neil Aliberti had spoken to the team as they assembled outside of Middle School 45 in the Bronx in preparation for their departure. Moments before piling aboard the vans and cars that were to carry them north, the sixth and seventh graders listened to him offer his best wishes for the coming test. He acknowledged them as a special group, the twenty-three out of a student body of sixteen hundred who had taken on the challenge of this intensive squash, academic, and service program. He made it clear that the eyes of their peers were on them as they went off to represent their families, their school, and their city.

Now, on Sunday afternoon, Jesse was struggling to hang on. Outside, her teammates were doing everything they could to help. "You

Discipline, perseverance and self-belief are the bedrock of the urban squash movement

can do it, Jesse!" and "Focus!" were among the cries issuing forth from the swarm of CitySquashers clad in the black track suits that they

had themselves raised the money to purchase a few months before. There on the brink of defeat, Jesse finally began to regain the momentum, her keen competitive instincts on full display as she prepared for each serve with her signature racquet twirling ritual. By the time she took the final point, she had convinced her opponent and everyone looking on from the gallery that her early lead had been no fluke.

How fitting that in the belly of the recently opened SquashBusters facility in Boston, that magnificent monument to everything that has been accomplished thus far by the urban squash movement, the myriad lessons of discipline, perseverance, and self-belief that are the very bedrock of that movement came together in Jesse's courageous win. Throughout the weekend, but perhaps most of all in that breakthrough performance, the power and the promise of CitySquash and her sister programs was on glorious display.

*Brian has been with CitySquash as Director of Squash and Community Service since the program was launched in the fall of 2002. He is also a gifted guitar player, singer and songwriter.*

### Program PROFILE

**Mission:** To provide children from economically challenged households with a nurturing and structured team environment to help them fulfill their academic, athletic and personal potential

**Activities:** Academic tutoring, squash instruction and competition, mentoring, travel and community service

**Founder:** Sanford M. Schwartz

**Founded:** 2001

**Home Base:** Fordham University

**Facility Partners:** Westchester Squash, Greenwich Academy and Concordia College

**2004-2005 Student Enrollment:** 45

Team Members: 30  
Summer Campers: 15

**Staff:** 4

**2004-2005 Budget:** \$200,000

**Lives Touched:** Countless

# CitySquash thanks the people and organizations that made our second year a success.

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\*Westchester Squash raises money for CitySquash throughout the year by adding a surcharge to its tournament entry fees and inviting players to make additional contributions to CitySquash.

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\*\*CitySquash is grateful to the 300 people who attended the inaugural CitySquash Bash. We regret that we only have space here to recognize the event's patrons (\$100 & above).

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CitySquash, Inc.  
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National Team Championships

Prince, Maylin and Tanesha  
Bring Home Titles

Team Academic Average  
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