



River City Squash News

Summer 2016 Update

www.rivercitysquash.org

Squash, Academics, and Mentoring



The 2016 school year has been a good year of growth for our urban squash program, and we are deeply grateful for the support of all involved. Thanks to the help of our supporters and volunteers, the program is slowly and steadily developing. This spring we began weekly sessions with our new school partner, **Brocklehurst Middle School**. Nine students from Brock formed the first team of our after-school program, and we have now connected with over one hundred children in both weekly sessions and outreach events.

We work to connect with students from grades four to seven in weekly after-school sessions, with the intent to offer support through the program until graduation from high school. Squash and academics are used to challenge and encourage the students, especially the ones who might need a little help to find the direction they need to succeed in school and in life.

Thanks to your support, we were also able to run programs with groups of children and youth from our community partners. These groups ranged in size from a handful of students from Four Directions School on the occasional field trip, to twenty-four boys from the Boys and Girls Club in weekly sessions (the group was split in half to come on alternate weeks, after a chaotic and busy first day!). Most sessions range from eight to twelve children on the two courts.

Our main focus is to develop and run regular weekly sessions with students from our partner schools; whenever possible we will also continue to run programs with our community partners.

Our Program



We welcome a mix of students in the program. Although our intent is to reach out to at-risk children and youth from lower-income families, we will include students from a variety of backgrounds, knowing the value of diversity and peer modelling.

The grade seven Brock students all show strong character, and great potential in many ways, athletically, academically, creatively. The ambition of the program is not to necessarily create squash players, although we work to make sure they enjoy the activities; we will help them to grow to their full potential in whatever way we can.



Danica Silver, the Learning Assistance Resource teacher at Brock, helped to guide the weekly sessions with our grade seven students this spring, acting as a coach, mentor, and counsellor. We look forward to working with Danica and connecting with these students again when school resumes in September.

The children in the sessions with our community partners range in age from five to twelve years; with the younger ones we focus on making sure all have the chance to play equally, that they have fun, and leave with a positive experience.

*A note from Dave Clutton,
Executive Director:*

We are very grateful for the support we have had to develop this program - many thanks to all of you!



If you would like to be involved in any way, or if you'd like to know more about our program, please contact me by phone: 250-314-9600, or by email: dave@rivercitysquash.org.

Our Mission



Our mission is to engage at-risk youth to achieve their full potential. We seek to build motivation, through an engaging environment, and to expand and enrich each participant's life experience.

The Urban Squash Model

The Urban Squash programs started in Boston in 1996 with a group called Squashbusters. The model has been used successfully by programs in cities across the United States with hundreds of inner-city youth. The program combines squash coaching, academic tutoring, mentoring, and community service to benefit at-risk youth in after-school and out-of-school activities.

A memorable and welcome comment came from one young boy who said quietly on the way out: "it was a big day today"; when asked why, he said "we came here".

It is greatly rewarding to be able to develop relationships with the children and youth through this program. We have the opportunity to help them grow and develop, to see positive changes and help them through challenges.

This intent is at the heart of the River City Squash program, to engage and challenge kids to do their best on the court, in their academics, and in the community.

Academics



Academic tutoring is a major component of the program. With the younger students, we add it in gradually using word search puzzles and quick math quizzes as simple ways to introduce new ideas and reinforce concepts. For all students, homework help is always available as needed.

We will focus particularly on academics relating to physiology and health; the game of squash is a natural environment to teach both Health Related Fitness (cardio-respiratory fitness, flexibility, muscular strength, muscular endurance, body composition) and Skill Related Fitness (coordination, agility, reaction time, power, speed, balance).

Sport



Squash is used to engage the students. Sport can be used to teach many positive life skills, such as focus, commitment, and sportsmanship; as an individual sport, squash also teaches the value of self-reliance and determination. The fast pace of the game and variety of shot choices also works well to appeal to children, including those with short attention spans.

Community Service

An important part of the Urban Squash model is to offer students the opportunity to give back to their community, through community service days. We will be planning sessions for the fall and winter; if you know of an organization or service that might benefit and would be a good fit for our students, please let us know!

School Partners

We have been developing the program by connecting with children and youth through schools and community partners, and this spring we began weekly sessions with our new partner school, Brocklehurst Middle School. We were fortunate to have the help and guidance of Danica Silver, who brought the program to her school, and volunteered at the after-school sessions as a coach, counsellor, and mentor to the students.

We are continuing to work towards developing partnerships with schools in north Kamloops that serve low-income families, as well as with the elementary school serving aboriginal children from the Kamloops Indian Band, the **Sk'elep School of Excellence**. We also plan to continue programs with the nearby alternative high school for aboriginal youth, **Four Directions Storefront School**.

Community Partners

We are working with several community service groups, including the **Kamloops Boys and Girls Club**, the **Full Circle Youth Centre** and the **Sports/Recreation team of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc – Kamloops Indian Band**, and daycares serving children from the north shore, to bring squash and sport opportunities to kids in their programs. The sessions are a lot of fun, and the children's enthusiasm is rewarding.

No Limits Fitness, the fitness facility with squash courts in Kamloops, has generously offered discounted access to their facility space for the program; their facility is located close to the schools serving low-income families on the north shore of Kamloops. The kids in our sessions can be fairly exuberant, and the noise and activity level is at times somewhat high - we are grateful not only for use of the space but also for the support of the facility members!

We are also working to develop an academic partnership with some of the faculty and students at Thompson Rivers University to help build on our academic curriculum, and we will continue to connect with TRU students to help build our volunteer base.

Our Volunteers and Supporters

Volunteers play a vital role in our program, providing positive role models and mentors for our students. We recruit our volunteers through local community agencies, the local university, and the local squash association, and parents and caregivers are welcome and will be encouraged to participate.

Volunteer coaches and tutors include Danica Silver, Hubert Bourne, Broughton Maywood, and Grant Rice.

If you are interested in helping our program as a volunteer, there are a lot of opportunities to become involved, and positions can be weekly or on-call.

Academic tutors: Volunteers are needed to work with our students on daily homework assignments. Subject areas may include basic reading, math, science, and computer skills.

Squash coaching: Volunteers are needed to coach, drill, and practice with the students on court. Coaching certification is preferred but not required, and players with a passion for the game and a minimum C playing level are welcome to apply.

Community outings: Volunteers are also needed to help with our community service events and other activities.

All volunteers and staff must obtain a criminal background check.

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