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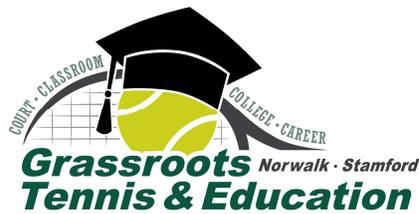
Norwalk Grassroots Tennis & Education Merges with Stamford Youth Tennis Academy

NORWALK, Conn. – Norwalk Grassroots Tennis & Education announced it will merge with Stamford Youth Tennis Academy, effective November 6. The merger will provide stronger support and services for children and youth in both Fairfield County communities.

The new name of the organization will be Norwalk/Stamford Grassroots Tennis & Education, Inc. Prior to the merger, the organizations worked to achieve the same mission and goals. The merger will allow the new, larger association to identify and leverage efficiencies, and to be bolder, stronger and more impactful in the communities they serve.

“Our mission is to build strength of character and a foundation for success through tennis and education,” said Betsy McNeil, who served as Executive Director of the Norwalk organization and will retain the same title and role with the new Grassroots organization. “We provide programming both on and off the court that supports the whole child – meeting their physical, academic, and social-emotional needs. We achieve this with a relationships-first, youth development approach where we meet each child where they are and work in partnership with them to support their efforts to achieve their goals.”

Founded in 1995 as Norwalk Grassroots Tennis, the organization is dedicated to supporting underserved children with programs based on the ideals of tennis legend Arthur Ashe. The free, year-round program combines tennis instruction with academic support and character development. The group has been honored multiple times by the United States Tennis Association for its excellent tennis and education programming. The Stamford Youth Tennis Academy formed in 2014 with similar goals to help underserved children learn tennis and improve their academic standing.



Grassroots anticipates serving a core group of 200-250 children ages 5-18 in the upcoming year. Norwalk's facility remains at 11 Ingalls Avenue in South Norwalk. That location is the site of the organization offices as well as the youth center and outdoor courts at the new William Rippe Tennis Center. Stamford's primary location is Cummings Park during spring, summer and fall. During the winter, Stamford and Norwalk children will be together for tennis at various indoor clubs in the area. Stamford kids will also have the opportunity to play at the Norwalk courts as well.

"We are excited to leverage each other's strengths and experiences to ensure we are continuously improving for our kids and families in both communities," McNeil said. "We are enjoying getting to know the children in Stamford – they are energized, engaged and passionate about tennis and the organization. Grassroots is thrilled to have the chance to work in partnership with Stamford kids, families and stakeholders to ensure all our kids have the opportunities, resources and support to build a foundation for their own success."

McNeil said Norwalk started programming for Stamford children in September. The feedback has been positive, she said, and has included Friday sessions in which Stamford students travel after school to Norwalk for tennis. Events and collaborative opportunities will expand over the next year.

Arthur Goldblatt, the Founder of both organizations, is particularly pleased about the increased impact this new joint organization will have for the kids, families and communities in both Norwalk and Stamford. "The players from both programs have been practicing together already, and it is wonderful to see how well they work together, how hard they try, and how much fun they have. This will be a powerful program," Goldblatt said.

"As we transition into this new organization, we will embark on a strategic planning process in the coming year to take a look at where we've been, where we are, where we want to go and how we are going to get there," McNeil said. "We are eager to step back, and explore how we can deepen and expand our impact in service and support of the increasing number of kids coming to our program."

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The mission of Norwalk/Stamford Grassroots Tennis & Education is to build strength of character and a foundation for success through tennis and education. Our goal is to ensure each of our children is on a path towards success on the court, in the classroom and in life. Our programming was developed based on our theory of change: Engage underserved children in Norwalk and Stamford through tennis, offer a safe and welcoming family environment, and provide them comprehensive support to meet their academic, physical and social-emotional needs. This helps build a foundation that enables them to graduate high school prepared for college and/or a career, putting them on a path toward greater opportunity for success.