



Spring 2011

Crowning Moments newsletter

Brought to you by the King Street Center

King Street Center | Established 1971 | Published Tri-annually | www.kingstreetcenter.org | Issue 6



The mission of the King Street Center is to promote personal and social wellness through educational, recreational, and social programs.



Hula hoopers celebrate after their performance at Hoopalooza, an annual event presented by the Burlington Rotary Club. King Street finished a strong second out of 30 teams at the May 7 event.

From sunup to sundown, you'll always see something going on at King Street Center. It could be preschoolers learning their letters and numbers. Maybe it's the adults who meet daily for English classes, the groups of kids working together on their homework, or the teens busy cooking in our kitchen. But blended in among more educational activities is a strong focus on PLAY.

Throughout the year, staff and volunteers carefully weave recreational and athletic programs into the learning environment at King Street. While the fun, physical fitness, and mental release this allows children is critical, the team building and confidence that result from these "extras" help children become good citizens in the community. "You have to be a good sport," says Maryan, age 10, a lesson she has learned at the center.

Formal programs such as Kids on the Ball and annual partnerships with CHILL, Girls Move Mountains, and RunVermont are instrumental. But, that's just the start. Volleyball players from Vermont Commons School conducted terrific clinics this past winter, much enjoyed by the children in our afterschool program. The annual dodge-ball tournament, summer swimming, weekend horseback riding, year-round pick-up basketball, hiking outings, and even Hoopalooza all help children live healthier, happier lives.



From the Director

Vicky

As I write this note, the King Street Ferry Dock remains mostly underwater—a vivid reminder of just how harsh this past winter has been. Getting through Vermont’s long winters is never easy, even for the heartiest among us.

But think for a moment what winter is like for many King Street families: over half moved here from tropical climates. Most live in small, cramped apartments with little room to move around. None has the means to participate in our state’s great winter stress-relievers, like skiing, joining a health club, or taking that spring break vacation someplace warm and sunny.

That’s where King Street comes in: whether it’s snowboarding with Burton’s excellent CHILL program, playing tennis with Jake at the Edge, or a simple game of four-square in our gym, we provide hundreds of children with wholesome, healthy, and just plain fun activities to keep young bodies active year-round.

Take Frank, for instance. He’s a child who grew up playing tennis with Jake and now, as a freshman, plays exhibition matches on the Burlington High School tennis team. He also plays tennis regularly with Mark, his King Street mentor.

Frank’s journey has not been an easy one. A couple of years ago I wasn’t sure what his future held - but through mentoring, Kids on the Ball, and Kids’ Lemonade, he has developed into a real leader with a cheerful personality. He works hard and he plays hard.

Be sure to stop by and say hello to Frank as he manages the Kids’ Lemonade stand on Church Street this summer. He might just challenge you to a match.



Dirt Divas are back!

Once again a group of teens will experience the thrill of mountain biking in Vermont’s great outdoors this summer, thanks to *Girls Move Mountains*, a program of Vermont Works for Women.

Six girls will take part in the *Dirt Divas* program, which teaches middle school girls how to ride mountain bikes in a supportive, all-girl environment.

Grounded in research on girls’ development, the week-long course focuses on developing girls’ self-confidence, improving physical and emotional resiliency, fostering healthy relationships, and encouraging regular physical activity. And it’s really fun, too!



Marathon Team on the run!

For the fourth year in a row, our teens participated in one of Burlington’s great spring events – the Vermont City Marathon Relay. We were thrilled to train once again with coach Scott LaMothe from RunVermont.

“Running brings these kids an outlet,” says Scott. “It teaches them how to handle some of the anxiety and stress going on in their lives. My goal is to teach them how to live a healthy lifestyle and take pride in themselves. But we also have a lot of fun, and a lot of laughs, too.”

Catching up with

It all started in 1999 when my first hip was really breaking down and I needed a change. My good friend Kathy Davis was working at the club at the time and really helped me think about how I could continue to function as a tennis pro. I also talked to my old friend, Tony, who started the Los Angeles Safe Passage Tennis Program, and he really inspired me. So, together, Kathy and I started to plan how we could bring 20 kids in next summer to play with a powerhouse team of club members. Twenty club members generously paid for the 20 kids to join. It was really successful. After it started building up, I knew we needed a non-profit partner. Roxane Leopold, who was the Director at King Street back then, said "sure!" Then I was really motivated.

The biggest goal of Kids on the Ball is fun. Kids realize they aren't going to have fun unless there is some order. Kids start learning to get in line because they want to keep having fun. It's not about tennis. It's about behavior. In that moment they are learning how to be social. They don't understand that you have to watch somebody - just for a minute - to get an idea of how to do it. Life is a lot slower than these video games and cell phones.

I see a lot of these kids again and again. We teach over 100 kids every week at the schools in Burlington. There I'll see the kids from King Street or one of the summer programs and they get so excited. I may not remember their names each time, but the kids never forget. I'm not as worried about the continuity. I'm just worried about the relationship at that moment in time. Right now.

These kids don't want to be told how to do things. Most of them don't get the chance to play organized sports, so they're not used to coaches telling them what to do. They just want to play the game right away, so that's how we start out. But pretty soon after we start playing, they realize they don't get it and are eager to follow instructions and learn the game.

It's about setting small goals. If you can get ten in a row, you get this. If you win the game, you get to keep playing. I don't want anybody losing or just hitting with no goal in mind. There is a method to the madness.

A lot of kids have really surprised me. The athleticism of these kids is unbelievable. They've become more and more athletic and more and more wild. You look at these kids who are just beat down day after day and they have a different way of looking at every scene. I'm looking from winning. They are looking from losing. Sometimes the things they say really surprise me. They are just so real.

I've had a lot of great volunteers over the years. Some are great and really stick with it. Some come once and say, "I just can't do this, but I'm going to leave you a check." Both kinds of support are critical to keeping the program going.

Vermont is the most unbelievable place. We know that taking care of our kids is the right thing to do. There are so many programs in big cities and the south that do so much more than we do, but they're not getting the credit or the money. Things aren't perfect here—there are still times when I ask other kids to join in with the King Street group and they say no. But I try to tell them I grew up next to the most devilish kids you ever met and it didn't rub off on me.

For sure, there are days that are just crazy. I sometimes wonder, "Did anyone get anything out of that?" They are so wanting. They want to win. They want candy. Every kid is like that. But these kids are more wanting than others. One little boy wanted a racquet so bad, he kept begging me. That day, every kid left with a racquet and a ball. Sometimes I ride my bike on the corner of Maple Street and the kids are hitting against the wall - they are playing! Now I just need to get them a solid net and chalk it off.

Jake Agna

Jake Agna has been teaching tennis to adults and children in the Burlington area for over 30 years. As the founder and director of Kids on the Ball, he has taught hundreds of children the great game of tennis.

Over the years Kids on the Ball has been recognized both locally and nationally as one of the best programs of its kind in the country. Awards include Junior Tennis and Learning "Chapter of the Year" from USTA New England (awarded twice), the Pizzagalli Lifetime Achievement Award, and the prestigious Eve Craft Community Service Award, a national prize for excellence in tennis and education programming, sponsored by the USTA.

Kids on the Ball runs year-round at the Edge Sports & Fitness, which has been one of our strongest partners since the very beginning; in Burlington's public schools, where children of all ages and abilities are introduced to the game; and on public outdoor courts in Burlington and Winooski during the summer months.



Kids on the Ball



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Permit #236
Burlington, VT

PO Box 1615 | Burlington, VT 05402

Return Service Requested



Attention GOLFERS

our
21st Annual Golf Tournament
is just around the corner.

Last year's event **sold out**
quickly, so register today!

Contact Kelli Shonter
kelli@kingstreetcenter.org
862-6736 x103

Burlington Country Club
June 27, 2011

8:30 AM
SHOTGUN START - BEST BALL FORMAT

With many thanks to our Gold Sponsors



Coming this fall...

40th Birthday Block Party
Kids' Art Hop
Women's Breakfast

Watch for updates in our monthly e-newsletter
and on Facebook - sign up today at
www.kingstreetcenter.org!



Newsletter sponsored by



Celebrating 10 years of

Kids on the Ball

Join us for breakfast at King Street Center to celebrate 10 years of Kids on the Ball, Coach Jake Agna, and the first recipient of the Jake Agna Award.

Wednesday, June 29 at 10:00 am
87 King Street
EVERYONE WELCOME