



News from the Andre Agassi Foundation for Education, Summer 2010

The Cinderella Story of Team Agassi *From beginners to college scholarships*

By Ryan Wolfington
USTA NV Executive Director

The story began eight years ago on the corner of Martin Luther King Jr. and Washington boulevards on two tennis courts at the Andre Agassi Boys and Girls Club. Not soon after, the inner-city children started showing up at country clubs to play local tournaments.

Their parents and friends were hopeful; they cheered with enthusiasm. I recall many of the established tennis parents saying, "Don't they know this is not football," and complaining about this new infusion of color into the tennis scene that traditionally calls for "all white" tennis attire.

I sat back and watched these 8- and 9-year-old beginners walk into their new world armed with tennis rackets and "TEAM AGASSI" T-shirts that seemed to protect them. They walked a little taller, smiled and made a few less enemies as a result of the words on their chest. It did not take long for those words TEAM AGASSI to do their magic. Andre was not interested in just sponsoring some T-shirts, rackets and free clinics. He decided to design a program that would transform a life completely. A child walks in as a beginner and walks out a college athlete – a changed person.

continued on page 2



In this issue:

2

**The Cinderella Story
of Team Agassi (continued)**
Grand Slam for Children
Stars Under the Stars

3

**AACPA Students Take
College Visits**

4

**Agassi Prep High School Updates –
High School Proficiency Exams**
New English Courses for Seniors!
A Special Evening with Andre Agassi

The Cinderella Story continued from page 1

Mentoring, tutoring and world-changing experiences, like taking trips to professional tournaments and traveling, put these children in a unique position. For the first time, they were staying in a hotel, seeing the ocean or gazing at the countryside. A whole new world unfolded and the children saw a new vision full of possibilities for their lives. Add to that the best training Agassi can provide and now all the country-club parents were welcoming Team Agassi with open arms, begging them to be their child's doubles' partner as they started winning state, sectional and national championships.

One child, whose father had him selling socks on the street every day to help add to their income, which was welfare, now had a way out. Quickly he went from being labeled "learning disabled" and failing out of school to A's and B's with the help of Betsy, who works with all the children for hours a day in a mandatory tutoring session at the Agassi Boys & Girls Club.

Another girl who would cut a hole in your chest with the anger in her eyes was transformed and, as a result, has the brightest smile you have ever seen. I am sure her uncles, who are gang members, are proud their niece is captain of her college tennis team on scholarship and already is planning to get a master's degree.

Or the young boy who, surrounded by gangster relatives living in a trailer park, somehow decided to devote his life to tennis. He became top 10 in the country and has straight A's for the first time in his life. This would not be possible without Agassi's program coach, Adam Carey, a topnotch former college coach, touring pro and four-year All-American.

According to Carey, he is most proud of his "Straight A's Club" and the team's 3.1 grade point average, a result of this inspiration and their policy that no player travels without a B average.

The Andre Agassi Boys and Girls Club tennis and tutoring program finds and helps a different type of child than most programs. They literally come off the streets and are left to wander around looking for something to do. Luckily, there are now three tennis courts and the Agassi program on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard has an open policy for any child to become a part of something great.

Just a few weeks ago, I got a call from former team Agassi player Jasmine Muhammad. She graduated from Howard University in Washington, D.C., and was asking for suggestions on finding a job. She is one of the young children I saw eight years ago playing tennis at that country club – the girl the parents were snickering at. Jasmine had been captain of her college tennis team, played the No. 1 position and was now speaking to me like an extraordinary young lady, far more mature than her peers. All I could think of was, "I hope Andre knows how incredible his program is."

I get the pleasure of watching these children grow up right in front of my eyes, and witness the transformation Andre envisioned years ago. That's why it has been my pleasure to present the Agassi Foundation with the USTA Intermountain Organization of the Year award.

Just weeks ago, the USTA went with the Agassi Foundation to the elementary schools near the boys and girls club. This is the toughest neighborhood in Las Vegas. There to help was Mrs. Owens, the first-grade teacher who also happens to be the first child to graduate from the Andre Agassi Boys and Girls Club tennis program. Mrs. Owens got a college scholarship for tennis and parlayed that into a teaching degree, where she now helps the next generation of youth in her community. There, we introduced tennis to the youth. We told them the tale of Jasmine Muhammad and how, if they work hard, they can join "TEAM AGASSI" and wear the T-shirt that has changed so many people's lives.



Grand Slam for Children

The Grand Slam for Children, presented by Genworth Financial and held at Wynn Las Vegas on October 9th, will bring together international stars – from music to comedy – to build awareness and raise money for our work. We are excited to announce that Elton John and Rob Thomas will be performing this year. If you'd like to purchase a table or seats, click here for more

information. For more information on the Grand Slam for Children, please contact julie@agassi.net.



Stars Under the Stars

Andre Agassi to play John McEnroe at the Farmers Classic to benefit AAFE! Tickets are still available for this special one-night celebration, Stars Under the Stars, on Saturday, July 24. Call 310-825-2101 or go to ticketmaster.com to purchase tickets. Learn more about this event at www.latennisopen.com.



AACPA Students Take College Visits

Eleven high school students and one middle school student from the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy (AACPA) visited Los Angeles, California, from January 22nd to 24th to attend the College Expo at the Los Angeles Convention Center. The College Expo is operated by the National College Resources Foundation with a mission to connect students and student athletes directly to colleges, including historically black colleges and universities.

The students arrived at the University of Redlands for a campus tour and lunch hosted by students from the Diversity Center who discussed the merits of their school, as well as the challenges of being a student of color in a predominantly Caucasian environment. AACPA students were excited about their strength of character and pride in their school. The group then traveled to nearby University of California, Riverside for a tour of the significantly larger and more diverse campus. AACPA students were shocked to see a physics lecture hall on a 45-degree angle that seats more than 500 students. Their tour guide was animated and kept their rapt attention even though it was pouring rain.

On the 23rd, the students spent the day at the College Expo talking to college representatives, filling out scholarship applications, and asking questions about different careers and vocations. The college

representatives were so inspired by the well-prepared and well-spoken students that when Agassi Prep invited them to speak at AACPA, they jumped at the opportunity to work with a school engrossed in a college-going culture.

Before heading back to Las Vegas on the 24th, the group toured California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA). The 28,000-student campus was silent on Sunday, but the group met a resident adviser who was kind enough to show them around the dorms and talk to them about life as an out-of-state student at a large state school. In stark contrast to CSULA, the group ended the trip at Occidental College, the home of AACPA's 2009 valedictorian, Desmend Jetton. Desmend was the tour guide and lunch host for the group who watched their first rugby match, and saw how bustling the campus was compared to CSULA. Desmend showed the group where he studies, lives and hangs out. He is doing extremely well academically and socially, and was an ideal paradigm for embracing the college preparatory messages sent at AACPA.

Upon returning to Las Vegas, the students announced that the trip was a "10 out of 10" based on how much fun they had learning about the campuses they visited.

When you support the Andre Agassi Foundation for Education, you become part of a movement that's improving education for all children. [Click here to make a donation.](#)

Agassi Prep High School Updates – High School Proficiency Exams

The class of 2011 is one step closer to graduation and college! The Agassi Prep High School is proud to announce the results our juniors earned on the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam. All students in the state of Nevada have to pass the High School Proficiency Exam in order to graduate with a diploma. Students begin taking the exam during sophomore year and have multiple chances to pass it before graduation. This is clearly a high-stakes exam and our teachers and students work hard to prepare.

The chart below outlines the growth our juniors have made this year!

	School Year 2008-2009	School Year 2009-2010
Reading	88%	100%
Math	43%	79.5%
Science	53%	88.6%

Congratulations to the class of 2011! They are determined to have a strong senior year.

New English Courses for Seniors!

College professors continually voice their concern regarding the level of writing college freshmen exhibit. Through a study organized by the Chronicle of Higher Education, 44 percent of university faculty members say their students are not ready for college-level writing. College-level writing moves beyond the structure and organization of writing and delves into stylistic choices and sophistication of thought and word choice.

In order to better prepare our seniors for the many, many writing assignments they will encounter in college, students will be taking a dual credit English composition class during their senior year. Both English 98 and English 100 classes, courses offered at most colleges, will be taught by an Agassi Prep English teacher who will be trained through the College of Southern Nevada. The course will supplement the English literature course seniors are also expected to take. It is our goal to develop students' expository writing skills before they head off to college in the fall of 2011! They will also earn three to five college credits by taking one of the classes.



A SPECIAL EVENING *with* ANDRE AGASSI

Moderated by Rick Reilly

Spend an intimate evening with eight-time Grand Slam winner and Olympic gold medalist, Andre Agassi, as ESPN Commentator, Rick Reilly, "Opens" the pages to Agassi's personal life, tennis career, best-selling book and future. This first-time event will coincide with the release of *Open* in paperback and with the U.S. Open 2010.



PRESENTED BY



ENTERTAINMENT

**Thursday,
September 2
8:00 PM
The Town Hall
in New York City**

Tickets from \$95.00 available
through **Ticketmaster:**

Click here
or 800-745-3000
or through

The Town Hall:
123 West 43rd Street
www.the-townhall-nyc.org