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# Inaugural Season A Smash!

June 10, 2006 was a great day for METROsquash. Kozminski School officials, University of Chicago luminaries, METROsquash staff members, volunteers, parents, friends and, most importantly, METROsquash fifth graders, gathered to celebrate the completion of the first year of the program. What began as a vision a little over a year ago, was now very real, having significantly impacted a number of individuals' lives.

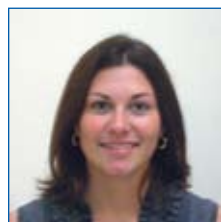
David Kay, METROsquash executive director said, "This has been a fantastic inaugural season. We have a lot to celebrate and a lot to look forward to."

Several volunteers that had participated in tryouts for the first class commented on the progress the students had made from squash neophytes to solid players. Academic achievement was equally impressive. In the first year of the program 90% of the students improved their academic performance.

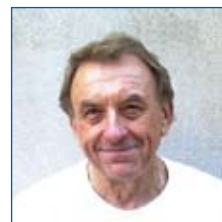
Lionel Bordelon, Kozminski School's Principal said, "We're extremely impressed with the impact METROsquash has had on our students. They devote a lot of time and energy to each

child. Our students need after-school options like METROsquash to help improve grades, fitness and self-esteem."

The day started, not surprisingly, with an hour of squash at the University of Chicago's Henry Crown Field House. The sun broke through the clouds just in time for an outdoor picnic outside of the University of Chicago Community Affairs Office. An official ceremony to celebrate students' completion of the first year of the program was followed by the breaking of a piñata. Blindfolded students wielding squash racquets instead of sticks soon smashed their way to a shower of candy.



**Christine Boukamp**  
*Academic Director*



**Peter Wendt**  
*Squash Director*

## We Welcome Two New Staff

Christine Boukamp has been living in Chicago since graduating in 2004 from University of Colorado. She has been working in the non-profit sector, specializing in academic, athletic and health based youth programming. Christine has been active in sports her entire life, playing competitive tennis and holding academic All American lacrosse honors.

Australian-born Peter Wendt has been actively involved in Chicago squash for many years. He has won tournaments throughout the U.S., represented Chicago in team events, and held numerous veteran national rankings. Peter will run at least three practices a week.



**Kareemah Bates Takes Aim With Her Racquet**  
*Photo credit: www.mariankrausphotography.com*

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**The METROsquash Board of Directors & Staff**

*Executive Director's Perspective:*  
**Looking Back & On the Move**



In late 2005, our inaugural class of students, their parents and their school embraced a game they had never heard of and accepted the challenge of committing to a fun and rigorous program. Ninety percent of them improved their grades, became avid squash players, and benefited from exposure to cultural activities and community service. We had a great year and we're just getting started!

This fall, expansion to two Chicago Public Schools and 24 students requires a solid team. In the classroom, we have welcomed Christine Boukamp as full-time academic director and on the court, Peter Wendt as squash director. We rely on a corps of committed volunteers for classroom and court instruction. Over 75 volunteers from the University of Chicago, and the squash and local community, have enlisted their services.

The University of Chicago is a vital partner, and has increased its commitment of facilities and work study employees. Chicago's squash community has given generously of its time and resources to help us thrive.

With this great team in place our ability to focus on the success of each student has increased significantly. As an organization, we are no longer a start-up - we are getting down to business.

When promoting the concept of Urban Squash in Chicago, METROsquash referenced the success of existing East Coast programs and asked, "Why not Chicago?" By becoming the first new program admitted to NUSEA (the newly formed national governing body of urban squash), we were able travel to the Urban Individual Championships in Boston. In June, our students competed with over 200 students from the Boston, New York and Philadelphia programs.

Read the September/October issue of *Squash Magazine* about the amazing rise of urban squash in America. We are proud to be part of NUSEA's national mission and believe Chicago will have a pioneering role in its direction and future success.

Financially, you have embraced the METROsquash program and put your faith in the idea of impacting students through squash and education. Our Board of Directors, Advisory Board and Staff are dedicated and committed to the success of our mission. We hope we have earned your continued support.

METROsquash is off to a great start, and that's exactly what it is – a start. Our students have just begun a journey through which they can craft an exceptional future. We have just begun to build lasting relationships with individuals, communities and organizations. We have just begun to have an impact.

This newsletter is the story of our first season, of our modest success and our ambitious plans. We encourage you to think about your place in this story – how would you like to help shape our future?

Sincerely,

David Kay  
Executive Director







**The 2005 - 2006 METROsquash Team**

**Second Chicago Public School on Board**



METROsquash is proud to partner with William Claude Reavis Elementary School. We now collaborate with two Chicago Public Schools – Kozminski and Reavis. In 2006, 24 fifth and sixth grade students from these schools will have the opportunity to succeed through the program.

Reavis School principal, Michael T. Johnson says of the partnership, “We’re excited to expose our students to a non-traditional sport such as squash. It’s important for our students to show a willingness to learn new things. What I find particularly exciting is METROsquash’s focus on academics and the strong emphasis on improving grades and test scores.”

**Windy City Open Inspires METROsquash Students**

Our inaugural students took part in the Windy City Open at the University Club this past January. Just two weeks into learning the game, the kids were inspired by the world’s top professionals. They got autographs on their t-shirts from many of the pros, and had the chance to hit on the glass court with David Palmer (the tournament champion!).

Following Palmer’s semifinal victory, Sara and Rachel King, captivated the audience with their enthusiasm and use of squash jargon exclaiming, “The next match will be an amazing display of shot making and deception!”

**Amr Shabana & Thierry Lincow**  
*Photo Credits: ©2006 Debra Tessier*



**Sisters Sara & Rachel King Address the Crowd**  
*Photo Credits: ©2006 by Debra Tessier*

The students raised over \$2,500 for METROsquash by selling orange bracelets provided by SSA Global, and t-shirts donated by Harrow Sports. Thanks to John Flanigan and the Tournament Committee for allowing us to be part of the largest tournament in North America!



In Boston, the team takes the famous 'Duck Tour'

## The Urban Individual Championships


At 5am on Friday morning, June 16th, 7 bleary-eyed but excited METROsquash students, four parents and one nervous executive director gathered outside the Crown Field House and boarded a shuttle bus to O'Hare. For many students and parents, it was the first time on a plane. The METROsquash team was on its way to Boston to compete in the Urban Individual Squash Championships.

At the Groton School, students from urban programs in Boston, New York, Philadelphia – and now Chicago! – had gathered to compete. Seeing Groton's gymnasium is an amazing experience. On the left is the basketball court and on the right is the hockey arena. Straight ahead are 10 squash courts in a state-of-the-art facility. Most inspiring for our students was walking into the squash center and seeing over 200 students from fifth through twelfth grades meeting each other, comparing notes on their programs, and competing on court.



After losing her main draw match, feeling despondent, and getting a pep talk from her mom about trying her best for every point, twelve-year-old Kareemah Bates bore down and won her next

three matches without losing a game. The transformation was incredible, and Kareemah earned a trophy for winning the consolation!



**Strength**  
By: Brianha Whitmore  
METROsquash

My muscles ache,  
They ache in pain,  
It hurts so bad  
I want to scream,  
But I don't care,  
Because strength makes me,  
Makes me strong,  
Makes me powerful.

When I feel painful and weak,  
I turn to strength to nourish me,  
It keeps me more than alive,  
All day long on and on.

"Strength" by Brianha Whitmore  
Poetry-slam entry read by the author to an audience of 200 at The Urban Individual Championships



## Heartfelt Thanks & Congratulations to Lucy Michael



Lucy served as our academic director for the 2005-2006 season. Lucy was tireless in supporting our students, and it is through her dedication that our students dramatically improved their academic performance.

The Office of Community Affairs and The Neighborhood Schools Program (NSP) at the University of Chicago made it possible for Lucy to work with the students of METROsquash. The University funded the position and recommended Lucy – a graduate student with extensive tutoring experience.

For her exceptional work with METROsquash, Lucy was awarded the NSP Tutor Recognition Award. Out of over 350 student employees and volunteers, only a small handful were selected to receive awards at the end of the year.

Lucy has been an excellent tutor, role model and compassionate friend to our students. We wish her every success and hope she'll visit METROsquash friends and students often!





**Weekend activities like this one at The Museum of Science & Industry are integral to the METROsquash experience**

**Cultural Activities & Community Service**  
*by Sara King, age 11*

The Field Trips were great and we went to a lot of places like the Art Institute, The Mexican Fine Arts Museum, The Museum of Science and Industry, The Windy City Open, The Lake Forest Recreation Center and the Lakeshore Athletic Club.

The trips taught me a lot of things, like how video games were invented and the history of Mexico. We learned about César Chávez who protested for rights for Mexican grape pickers. The grape pickers didn't have water, shade, and bathrooms and they weren't paid enough.

We also learned about squash. The Windy City Open and the Illinois State Junior Tournament at the Lake Forest Rec Center really taught me how to compete and try my hardest for every point.

For one of our community service trips, we went to Burnham Park and cleared brush and weeds. Even this was fun because we were helping make the park a better place.

I really wasn't doing well in writing until METROsquash. They gave us writing assignments about each field trip. Sometimes this was a lot of work but it really helped me out. I got better grades and even did better in the writing part of the ISAT test.

Thank you for all the great things that made this first year of squash the best. Thank you for everybody who helped METROsquash!



**Splish, Splish, SPLASH! was a big hit this summer – Volunteer Richard Zur is pressed to keep up with Rachel King**

**METROsquash Summer Camp**

In August, METROsquash held a three week summer camp. After a year of intense work on the court and in the classroom, the summer camp was a great chance to play squash, have fun and let loose.

Each morning at 9am, the day would start in the Crown Field House with a spirited board game. Scooby Doo Monopoly was one of the favorites, along with Scrabble, Othello, Chess and Backgammon. David Kay took on all challengers in Connect Four and saw his dominance in that game greatly diminish over the three week period.

Despite no air-conditioning, students were eager to get on court and through drilling, rallying and countless round robins, everyone saw their game - and fitness - improve.

On the last day of camp, students and volunteers went to the park to compete in a messy Egg Toss and a game of 'Splish, Splish, SPLASH' – a derivative of 'Duck, Duck, GOOSE' with a bucket of water - which was particularly suited to a hot summer day in Chicago!

Next summer, METROsquash will continue the Summer Camp tradition and will also send some of its sixth grade students to intensive Summer Squash Camps at Princeton University and elsewhere.



**Excited Students Conclude Camp by Opening 'Going Back to School' Kits Donated by Chicago Public Schools**



**Future star Leah King addresses the crowd**  
*Photo credit: www.mariankrausphotography.com*



**Parent Perspective:  
METROsquash Forms  
Parent Advisory Committee**

I am Lozitta Hunley, and I have been a METROsquash parent for one year. This is an excellent program, one that has opened up a new world for inner-city children. My daughter Tierra has

really enjoyed being on the squash team, it was fun for her to learn a new sport that she had never heard of before. She has made new friends and she's feeling much more confident.

I am impressed that METROsquash doesn't just focus on squash, but gives equal focus to academics. Tierra's grades have improved since working with the volunteers.

This year we want our children to do even better in squash and in the classroom. That's why we have formed the METROsquash Parent Advisory Committee (MPAC). The purpose is to get parents more involved with decision making, fundraising and helping out when needed. We are looking forward to having another exciting year, one that will be a great experience for everybody involved.



**Students & volunteers team up for the Egg Toss – it's all ab strength**



**U of C Volunteer Perspective:  
Applying Renaissance  
Thinking to METROsquash**

My name is Tommy Olsen, and I am a fourth year undergrad. I have had the pleasure of volunteering for METROsquash two days a week.

When I think of my experience with METROsquash, a couple of things immediately come to mind. First, you have David Kay, a guy whose enthusiasm for the game, love for the kids, and belief in the program is so plain to see that it is impossible to not get excited yourself. His stewardship of METROsquash is something I admire a great deal. Now if only I could get him to give me free lessons!

Then there are the volunteers, a large pool of people from different backgrounds who come together to knock it around with the kids on court and to work with them in the classroom. They are kind, patient, and never short on encouragement. It is a routine sight to see the kids literally drop what they're doing and give a volunteer a massive group hug the minute he or she shows up for the day. Gently hitting a volunteer with a racket is another sign of affection, apparently.

Another aspect of METROsquash that had an impact on me is its structure. I took a class on the Renaissance this past quarter, and one of the overarching emphases of that era was that the greatest education you can give to a young person combines both physical and mental rigor. This was just as I was beginning my time as a volunteer, and I could not help thinking of the program in this context.

Finally, METROsquash would be nothing without the kids. They are an absolute joy to coach, teach, and just spend time with. The University of Chicago is a pretty serious place, filled with serious people and serious study, so it has been a gift for me to spend a couple of hours a week mixing it up with these kids, who can be serious and focused when they need to, but are just as prone to big wide smiles and laughter.

For all the reasons mentioned above, and many more, volunteering for METROsquash has been an incredibly rich and enjoyable experience. I may be a coach-teacher to the kids, but they have taught me a lot and given me a lot in return.



**Tevin Castro discovers the Zen of wall sits**



## METROsquash launches Annual Campaign & The Back Wall Society

METROsquash's annual campaign kicks off this fall with a goal of raising \$225,000 from board members, individuals, corporations and charitable foundations.

Board chairman Jackie Moss says, "We can't overstate the importance of supporting METROsquash at this time in our development. We need the help of the entire community to make METROsquash a sustainable program in Chicago."

A keystone to the fundraising campaign is the Back Wall Society, which is comprised of leadership gifts of \$2,500 or more over each of the next three years. "The members of our Back Wall Society are literally and figuratively the people standing behind METROsquash," says David Kay.

The Back Wall Society's current goal is to raise \$130,000 a year for the next three years. These generous gifts will ensure that our students get top coaching on the squash court, have a first-rate academic curriculum, travel to Urban Squash tournaments, and learn the values of becoming culturally aware and civically involved in their communities.



Urban squash pioneer Greg Zaff (second from left) visits the METROsquash program

*If you would like to make a donation,  
or help out with fundraising  
please contact David Kay at:  
[david@metrosquash.org](mailto:david@metrosquash.org)  
Telephone (773) 251-1711*



This past May, students & volunteers cleared brush and weeded areas in Burnham Park

## METROsquash Joins NUSEA

In May of 2006, METROsquash was admitted to the National Urban Squash and Education Association (NUSEA). In becoming a provisional member of the organization, METROsquash had to meet 16 key program requirements and pass a site visit from urban squash pioneer, Greg Zaff.

NUSEA is the governing body for urban squash programs and was formed to provide a network of support for new and existing programs. In addition to receiving program knowledge and support, METROsquash received a \$5,000 grant from NUSEA and a \$5,000 grant from the USSRA.

The founding members of NUSEA are Squashbusters in Boston, Streetsquash in Harlem, CitySquash in the Bronx and SquashSmarts in Philadelphia. Outside of these 'original four', METROsquash is the first organization to be accepted into NUSEA and the first organization to launch outside of the East Coast squash hub. METROsquash is delighted to be a part of NUSEA and is eager to promote the national mission here in Chicago.



Students show off medals from  
The Illinois State Junior Championships

## METROsquash asks for your enthusiasm and participation in support of Chicago Public School students.

Below are ways you can help, plus our 'wish list.'

1. Make a financial contribution
2. Volunteer your time
3. Join our mailing and e-mail list
4. Keep current with us at [www.metrosquash.org](http://www.metrosquash.org)
5. Donate goods and services

Our 'Wish List' for the 2006-2007 school year

- 2 laptop computers
- Academic supplies
- Squash equipment of all kinds
- Auditing services
- A METROsquash 8-person passenger van

METROsquash practices Monday through Thursday at The University of Chicago's Henry Crown Field House. On Saturdays, the team takes part in cultural activities, community service and squash events. To get involved, e-mail [info@metrosquash.org](mailto:info@metrosquash.org) or call METROsquash at (773) 241-5150.

## METROsquash thanks the donors who graciously supported us in the 2005 - 2006 school year.

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