

Slumber Party

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Boys 1st Squash Coach Doug Burbank recently hosted a three-day slumber party in the Danforth Squash and Rowing Center for 21 New York City middle-schoolers and four chaperones from CitySquash.

After playing squash all day, the kids called the old gym above the squash courts home base — boys sleeping to the left, girls sleeping to the right. They watched classic horror flicks on the pull-down movie screen in the squash center and even got back on the courts in their pajamas for a late-night game or two.

“Three kids actually got up at 5 o’clock to play,” CitySquash Director of Middle School Academics Katie Greenbaum said with a laugh. “This is a perfect spot for us because they could come downstairs and play. Plus, locker rooms are in the building, the dining hall is right there. It’s been great.”

Roughly 60 of the 300 participants in last weekend’s National Urban Squash Championships were from CitySquash, the others being enrolled in similar programs in Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Harlem, New Haven, Philadelphia and San Diego.

CitySquash administrators were able to place the majority of their players in homes around the Bay State. And luckily, Burbank was able to act swiftly after receiving a last-minute phone call.

“Even though this all happened last-minute, so many people on campus were more than willing to help,” Burbank said. “I sent out an e-mail saying I needed beds and within 48-hours I had 27. The Boys Squash Team helped me move the beds up to the old gym. CJ (Smith ’12) strung racquets. The household department cleaned the old gym before the students arrived. The dining hall workers served the players breakfast. It really all came together so easily.”

[CitySquash](#) is a non-profit after-school program based at Fordham University which helps motivated youths from poor families in the Bronx to succeed on an academic, athletic and personal level.

Why squash? “It’s a fun sport,” sixth-grader Karina Lazaro said. “You can play hard,” seventh-grader Elaine Hualoto said. “You need to cooperate with other people,” seventh-grader Leandre Damil said.

Founded in 2002, more than 120 elementary, middle, high school and college students commit to an intensive, year-round program featuring squash, tutoring, community service, travel, high school placement, employment training and college preparation.

In fact, six CitySquashers toured the campus on Saturday, as part of the Brooks Admission Office’s Information Day, and two eighth-grade players currently applying to Brooks found time to interview with Assistant Director of Admission Sarah Gurry and Director of Student of Color Recruitment Rich Espinal.

Both Burbank and Espinal cheered on the CitySquash players during their matches at Northeastern University and Harvard University. And Burbank has already extended the offer for CitySquashers to stay again next year.