

CitySquash program helping at-risk youths

BY TANYANIKA SAMUELS
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Monday, September 29th 2008, 6:49 PM



Costanza for News

Bryan Patterson (l.), director of the CitySquash program, takes a break from teaching, with his assistant.

The competition was fierce on the [Fordham University](#) squash courts recently as dozens of [Bronx](#) youths battled for a spot with CitySquash.

The free squash program for at-risk Bronx youngsters is growing by leaps and bounds, said co-founder [Tim Wyant](#).

"It used to be just an after-school program for kids," he said. "Now it's much more sophisticated and multidimensional."

Now in its sixth year, the [Belmont](#)-area program has taken on a new challenge by adding to its rolls elementary-school-aged students from Public School 205 on Southern Blvd. Previously, the program only worked with Middle School 45 on Lorillard Place.

An estimated 100 youths, ages 8 to 18, are expected to participate, with sessions resuming this week.

CitySquash is more than just learning squash, the fast-paced indoor racket sport. A lot of focus is placed on tutoring, mentoring and community service.

Students attend three-hour sessions up to four times per week. They spend half the time being tutored, and the other half practicing for tournaments, which typically take place on weekends.

Already, the academic component of the program has made strides. Twenty-one of the program's students have won more than \$2.3 million in scholarships to attend tony boarding schools such as [Blair Academy](#) in [Blairstown, N.J.](#), and [St. George's School](#) in [Middletown, R.I.](#)

Wyant, a [Harvard](#) alum, considers that a coup.

"Squash is special, because it gives our kids access to a world to which many of them have had no access," he said. "You can see over the years how access to that influences their view of themselves, and of what they can accomplish."

Program officials also work to expose students to the world outside the Bronx.

Last summer, two students traveled to [Spain](#), [Holland](#) and [Germany](#) for squash tournaments. Another 30 toured seven states across the [U.S.](#)

Students also get treated to camping trips, like the recent jaunt to [Lake Placid](#), N.Y.

"It's an opportunity for them to experience the world," Wyant said. "We put a lot of emphasis on education, but we have to remember to have fun, too. If the kids aren't having fun, we're not doing something right."

"It's really fun on the road trips," said [Jocelyn McKenzie](#), 12. "I like CitySquash too because it teaches you teamwork and sportsmanship."

[Andrew Cadienhead](#), 13, joined CitySquash three years ago.

"I didn't know what it was. And at first, it was like 'What am I doing?'" he said. "But then I got used to it and we like to goof around on the court. It's so much fun."

Visit www.citysquash.org to learn more about CitySquash.