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[Digital photos available]

## Winners One and All!

### Children with special needs enjoy tennis program at Prospect Park

Brooklyn, NY – On a recent Sunday afternoon, the tennis bubbles at the **Prospect Park Tennis Center** were filled with happy laughter and cheers of encouragement as the children in the Special Aces tennis program worked out on the courts. Qualified physical and occupational therapists join the Center’s tennis professionals to offer group exercise and tennis instruction to children with varying degrees of physical and cognitive challenges. Thanks to generous funding from the **Louise and Arde Bulova Fund**, tuition for each child has been kept below \$100 for the eight-week session and scholarships have been made available to families in need of financial assistance.

“Support from the Bulova Fund has made it possible for these children and their parents to work with a dynamic team of therapists, tennis pros, and community volunteers,” said Paul Campbell, Director of the Prospect Park Tennis Center. “The enthusiasm of everyone involved with the Special Aces Junior Development Program has been amazing. All the kids arrive excited and motivated to learn and play.”

“We’re very happy to be able to help the Prospect Park Alliance create an innovative new program for children with special needs,” said Paul Guilden, Chairman of the Louise and Arde Bulova Fund. “The Special Aces program demonstrates that it is possible to remove the barriers that have kept these children from enjoying physical activities and sports like tennis.”

The approximately 12 – 14 children at each of the two Sunday sessions are grouped together according to age and ability. Two physical therapists, four tennis pros, and six volunteers (most studying to be physical therapists) provide a nearly one-to-one ratio of supervision.

“We semi-formally assessed the children on the first day to determine factors such as flexibility, strength, general coordination, and hand/eye coordination,” explains Jennifer Stumpf, MS, PT. “Of these areas, I have seen the greatest improvement in hand/eye coordination strength, and shoulder strength. Less measurable, but still very important, I have seen improvements in attention span, turn-taking, and general comfort level with the different strokes of tennis.”

Rosanna Lee, PT, adds, “The program gives children with special needs an opportunity for fun and socialization while playing a structured activity. It has been amazing to see how motivated and quick the children are to learn a new sport.”

Seven year-old Special Aces player Harry Muller has multiple physical and cognitive disabilities and is non-verbal. But his mother Michele Muller is confident that Harry enjoys the program. “He’s engaged, smiling and participating to the best of his abilities,” she says. “Socializing can often be difficult for him -- sometimes he can be aggressive. But after the activities he seems to be relaxed and calm and is happily sitting with the other kids enjoying snacks.”

(cont.)

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Cheryl Boucher, mother of nine-year-old Conner Castaldi who has a brain injury resulting from a tumor, says the Special Aces program helps ameliorate the isolation the family sometimes feels. “It’s been hard to find programs in Brooklyn where he can participate in a sport outside of school like the other kids in the neighborhood get to do,” she says. “You feel very isolated, not being able to go with other parents to see your child play a sport. So the program has been great for Conner’s self-esteem and so exciting for us.”

The Louise and Ardè Bulova Fund is named in honor of Louise Bulova Guilden and Ardè Bulova, who were the children of Joseph Bulova, founder of the Bulova Watch Company. The family has a long and distinguished history of helping people with disabilities, most notably through the vocational rehabilitation work of the pioneering Bulova School of Watchmaking. The Fund was established by Paul Guilden, Louise’s son and grandson of Joseph Bulova, to continue this wonderful legacy of assisting people with disabilities and also to support programs that serve children.

The Special Aces Junior Development Tennis Program at the Prospect Park Tennis Center is a program of the Prospect Park Alliance. All proceeds from the Tennis Center go toward providing a high level of service and amenities for patrons of the Center.

The Prospect Park Tennis Center is open daily, 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. The Center is located at the Parade Ground on the corner of Coney Island and Parkside Avenues (Park Circle). Street parking is available on Parkside Avenue. Call (718) 436-2500 for more information.

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In partnership with the City of New York and the community, the Prospect Park Alliance restores, develops, and operates Prospect Park for the enjoyment of all by caring for the natural environment, preserving historic design, and serving the public through facilities and programs. Prospect Park’s 585 acres of meadows, waterfalls, forest, lakes, and athletic facilities comprise a masterwork of urban green space.

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