



NEWS RELEASE

Co-op City Tennis and Legendary Coach Ms. Lorraine Still Going Strong

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A \$100,000 donation from the DICK'S Foundation ensures the program's stability for years to come. People are always astounded when Lorraine Alexander tells them how many children she has. About 300, is what she says.

"Ms. Lorraine" as she is affectionately called, is the co-founder of Co-op City Tennis Club, a New York Junior Tennis & Learning program, in New York City. Since 1983, when she and her late husband, Milton, began the program, countless children have gone through the program at a pace of about 300 each year and left a better version of themselves.

"I see them as my children," explained Ms. Lorraine. "I do not see them as just kids doing tennis."

Ms. Lorraine's passion for her players, her community and the importance of sport in the lives of young people is on full display in the latest **DICK'S Foundation spot**. It focuses on the mission and rich history of the tennis club before a big reveal at the end. Players are shocked as they walk onto the courts lined with red shoe boxes with rackets and gear neatly placed in socially-distant spots for each child. Ms. Lorraine is surprised by a \$100,000 donation that will ensure the future of the program for years to come.

"The kids haven't stopped talking about that weekend," said Ms. Lorraine. "It was like Christmas to them."

It was a spectacular ending to a session that almost did not happen. In the spring and early summer, New York City

was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. The thought of running the July-through-October session seemed impossible. But then, the phone calls began. They trickled in at first, but soon enough, all of Ms. Lorraine's children were asking the same question: "Would there be tennis in the summer?"

At first, Ms. Lorraine said no. But then cases in New York City slowly dropped and more knowledge about how to combat the illness came to light. Ms. Lorraine knew that many of the parents in her community worked on the frontlines. She knew that they could not even hug their children when they came home after a long day and instead needed to properly disinfect first. Ms. Lorraine knew what she needed to do. In a year like no other, the children needed normalcy. They needed to get back on the tennis courts.

"I said it's not about me, it's about them," Ms. Lorraine recalls. "I said, you know, these kids need some place to go. They need to hit that little ball. They need to interact with each other. So, I started the program."

After a few days, wearing facemasks, social distancing, disinfecting the balls and wiping down the rackets became second nature, and the program was up and running as it always has.

Inspired by tennis great Arthur Ashe, Milton and Lorraine Alexander started the Co-op City Tennis Club in 1983. They first centered the club around adults, but when they saw the tremendous interest from the kids, they realized that was their future. The club's mission is to bring tennis to youth from high-risk, low income, inner-city neighborhoods and offer opportunities for self-development while highlighting education and a positive code of behavior.

Not every kid can go on to become a tennis great, but they all get something out of the program. Some earned a New York Junior Tennis and Learning (NYJTL) college scholarship, others grew their confidence, while still others realized the importance of setting a goal and striving for it.

Whether it was coaching them on their form or answering questions about life, Milton and Lorraine were always there for the kids. After Milton passed away in 2009, Ms. Lorraine did not know if she would keep the program going. But those phone calls from her kids brought her back to the tennis courts.

After so much uncertainty to begin the year, the future of the club is now secure thanks to Ms. Lorraine's dedication and support from the DICK'S Foundation.

"You have brought such great joy to all those wonderful children," said Ms. Lorraine. "We, as adults, have to be there for them. We need to make sure that they have happiness in their existence. This is what life is about: It's about giving back and making kids happy."

You can help support programs and athletes like those at the Co-op City Tennis Club with a donation to the Sports Matter program to help youth athletes achieve their dreams. Make a **donation online** or text SPORTS5, SPORTS10 or SPORTS15 to 20222 to make a \$5, \$10 or \$15 donation to The DICK'S Sporting Goods Foundation.

