

# CTP NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2024

## *Remembering Curtis Blocker: A Lifelong Part of Our NYJTL Family*



*It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of our colleague and dear friend, Curtis Blocker. He was involved in a fatal highway accident the night of October 15th.*

*Curtis was a kind, warm-hearted, gentle soul who made a lasting impact on many of us. He began his tennis journey as a middle schooler through NYJTL Community Tennis Programs (CTP) in the late 2000's at our Far Rockaway locations (Bayswater & Beach Channel HS). First as a volunteer in the early 2010's he developed a passion for coaching and working with our inner-city youth eventually progressing through the various roles of intern, coaching with both CTP and ACES, and eventually becoming a CTP Site Director.*

*While most recently working full-time with the Department of Sanitation, the last couple of years, he remained dedicated to CTP continuing to give back by coaching youth in Queens (Rochdale Village) and Brooklyn (Grand Street Settlements) a few afternoons each week.*

*Tennis was a huge part of Curtis's life. Many of our coaches became his second family. He poured himself into the sport and more importantly into the relationships he built with all of us. Curtis was funny, open-minded, and a good listener—someone you could talk to. Curtis will be deeply missed by all of us.*

*He exemplified all that was good about NYJTL.*

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## CTP in Harlem

Both sites Howard Bennett and PS 125 are Coached by the same group of NYJTL; Coaches Willie, Ron, Will, Donald and Perrin have coached at those courts for many years previously. This fall, it was a welcoming sight to see so many students returning from either the previous summer session from prior years, and each and every child was eager to pick up from where they left off. Every day that we were out on the court, we were focused on creating a safe, fun, and educational environment for the kids.

Their success was clearly highlighted by the constant joy and excitement of the students, as well as their efforts to improve their grasp of the game outside and after our site Sessions. These two Sites, just like all in CTP are amazing representations of the community aspect of this program.

Coach Perrin says, *“Being a native of Harlem, where both sites are located, I’m constantly reminded of the impact we coaches have on our students’ lives. I couldn’t count on my fingers the number of times I have been ambushed by a student while running errands, just for them to express how excited they are for the next session and to make me promise them my attendance.”*

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## Coach Lisette Huerta-Moyotl Continues Her Family's NYJTL Legacy

Lisette has played tennis with NYJTL since she was a tiny girl hoping to catch-up with her six brothers and cousins! Continuing the family tradition of support for our program, Lisette joined the ranks of our dedicated coaches this past spring when she turned 15.

Two of her family members received scholarships from NYJTL once they graduated from high school. Three, including Lisette, earned coveted spots in our elite CTP+ program.

Lisette exemplifies the character development NYJTL instills and hopes to pass along important life skills to our kids.

## Coach Kento Returns to His Roots

Kento Smith began his journey with NYJTL nearly a decade ago through the Free Community Tennis Program (CTP). This past summer, he officially joined NYJTL as a coach at the Crotona Park location, following his on-court training at the Cary Leeds Center, where he is a participant in their Scholar Athlete Program.



This fall, Kento returned to his roots by coaching at the CTP site at JHS 190Q/ Russell Sage Playground—the very spot where he first picked up a tennis racket. Reflecting on his return, Kento was struck by how much smaller the space felt compared to his childhood memories.

After the 8-and-under class, parents learned about Kento's background and his journey from being a young player at the same location to now excelling both academically and athletically at Beacon High School, where he plays second singles on one of the top tennis teams in the city.

Kento's story is a testament to the idea that every kid has to start somewhere, and with dedication and support, the possibilities are endless.

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## Sign up for our Winter Program!

This 20-week program runs from November to March allowing children and teens, ages 5 to 18, to play tennis from 6 – 8 a.m on the weekends.

See all of our locations and register: <https://www.nyjtl.org/programs/ctp/winter-ctp/>

In addition to instruction, we run tournaments during the Holiday break, Presidents' Week break in February and immediately following the conclusion of the Winter Program with the Hartman Cup Tournament.

