

STREET SQUASH

NEWS

Vol. 7 no. 1

Winter 06

STREETSQUASHERS GROW ABROAD AND AT HOME

This summer, 30 StreetSquashers participated in exciting opportunities from Panama to Belize, from Puerto Rico to Upstate New York. Read here about their experiences!



Sheena traveled to Puerto Rico with Windsor Mountain International's PROJECT Puerto Rico program. This program aims to expose high school students to the ideas of sustainable development and the richness of Puerto Rican culture through travel and community service.

A Tropical Adventure

By Sheena Suckoo

The best experience I have ever had was living with twelve complete strangers this past summer in Puerto Rico. Because of that experience, I've learned how to be responsible for myself, how to cook, and how to be open to people in a short period of time. I made friends with whom I will remember the good and the bad times we shared together forever.

On the first day when I arrived, I was very nervous to see who I was going to live with for a month. Everyone was nice and very social with one another, but I clicked with this girl named Laura in like, five minutes.

We were staying in the El Yunque rainforest for one week. I was extremely nervous about what I would face there. Our leaders, Andy

and Emily elaborated to us that it would be raining almost every day, we would not be able to take a shower for the entire week, and if we had to go to the bathroom, we would have to dig a hole in the ground. My face dropped. I didn't want to be in Puerto Rico anymore. But being the tenacious person I am, I wanted to finish this journey I had decided to take.

The next day, the group and I had to do community service in the rainforest. I had to pick up trash in the steamy hot sun, which was difficult to do. After I had to shovel wet sand out of a pool, and then the rain started to pour on me. I was soaked and muddy, which made me extremely miserable, because there

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Courtesy of Dayna Kirk.

Questions and Answers

with Paige Babilonia and Brussels Mercado



Paige and Brussels spent a month together with fellow StreetSquashers, Shelby Bozeman and Javen Williams at Buck's Rock camp this past summer.

We love Buck's Rock!

StreetSquash: What did you do at Buck's Rock Camp?

Paige: Wow, I did a lot of fun and interesting things at Buck's. I made a tie, a purse, a skirt, earrings, a shirt, a necklace, stuffed animal, belt, and I also developed pictures and auditioned for a play. I was also in a 50s dance.

Brussels: At camp I did a lot of different stuff. I made jewelry, pillows, a sweater, ceramic bowls, glass pebbles, and leather bookmarks, bracelets, belt and moccasins. I also developed pictures and auditioned for a play.

StreetSquash: Which was your favorite activity and why?

Paige: My favorite activity was sewing, because it was fun making and designing my own things.

Brussels: My favorite activity was sewing. At first, when I looked at the list of activities, I didn't think I was going to go to sewing, but then I met this girl and she told us to try it out. I did and I just loved it. I spent half of my day there and made a lot of stuff. Now, since my mom sews at home, I sew pillows and help out my mom when I have time.

StreetSquash: Was Buck's Rock like what you expected it to be?

Paige: No, Buck's Rock wasn't what I expected it to be. I imagined Buck's to be very fun, but it turned out to be even better!

Brussels: To tell you the truth, no. I was expecting it to be more closed up and with buildings because it was an arts camp. It was woodsier and out in the open.

StreetSquash: What is your best memory from Buck's Rock?

Paige: My best memory from Buck's Rock was when Brussels, Javen, Shelby, and I planned to scare the campers at night during a campfire. We told a scary story and Javen dressed up in a mask and a suit and walked slowly from behind the trees with a fake knife. We didn't scare everyone, but it was still funny.

Brussels: My best memory about camp was meeting new people and eating with them and going everywhere with them.

StreetSquash: What was the most challenging part of your time at Buck's Rock?

Paige: The most challenging part of my time at Buck's Rock was finishing all of the projects that I started, in time. Also it was hard saying bye to your friends at the end of camp.

Brussels: I think the most challenging time at Buck's Rock was distributing my time and trying to finish all of my projects because there was so much to do!

StreetSquash: What did you learn from your time at Buck's Rock?

Paige: From my time at Buck's Rock, I learned to be a lot more independent, and I also realized my individuality. I also learned to try many things.

StreetSquash: What was a typical day like at Buck's Rock?

Brussels: A typical day was waking up at 8 and eating breakfast from 9 to 10. The shops opened at 10, and we went to the shops from 10 to 12. Lunch was from 12 to 1, then rest hour from 1 to 2. The shops re-opened from 2 to 6. Dinner was from 6 to 7, then it was evening activities and shops took turns having late hours. Check in at the bunks was at 10 and lights out at 10:30.

StreetSquash: Is there anything else you'd like to share about your trip?

Paige: I think that Buck's Rock is a great camp. I met so many people and it was a fantastic experience. At

first I thought that I would miss my family, but when the time came to go back home, I didn't want to leave. Buck's was really the best camp I have ever been to. Also, in order to go to Buck's you don't have to be good at any performing arts. You could go to have the great experiences and life changing opportunities. After the month at camp you become attached to your friends and it was really sad when I had to go back home. ●



For example, I had never heard of weaving before, and I saw a lot of people making belts. With all of the thread it looked so hard, but when I tried it, it was really easy, and I really liked my belt.

Brussels: At Buck's Rock, I learned that you have to be independent, because my friends and I didn't always want to do the same things at the same time.

A Life Changing Experience

by Princess Hardwell



Princess Hardwell, who traveled to Belize with Global Routes, with her host brother, Carlos Ruano.

On July 1, 2005, I departed my home in Harlem to leave for another country. I was afraid, anxious, and excited all at once. It would be my first time leaving the United States. I had a 7:45 AM flight to Belize.

At first when I arrived in Belize, I was scared and homesick. However, as time passed, these feelings soon left. For the first five days, I stayed in a resort for orientation with the rest of my group. On July 6, 2005, we left to stay in a village called El Progreso, also known as Seven Miles. It is a Spanish speaking community, and also very religious.

While living in El Progreso in Belize, I stayed with a beautiful, unique family, the Ruanos. I had three brothers, three sisters, one cousin, and a mother and father. At first I was nervous about living there because I was no good at Spanish, and their English speaking skills were not that good, however we

found ways around it. As time progressed, I helped them with their English speaking skills as they helped me with my Spanish speaking skills.

A typical day in El Progreso was waking up at 6:30 AM to get ready for work at 8 AM. The community service that I did was building a library. The community I lived in had no electricity or running hot water, but the atmosphere in Seven Miles was comfortable and great. After work, I'd come up to play with my sisters, Rosa and Mary, and talk to the oldest sister, Ruth. Then I would play fight with my brother Hugo, and swing my younger brothers around in circles. They loved it! At night we would go to the church and dance and sing. It was really a life changing experience.

While I was there, I became best friends with my cousin, Adilizar Alvarado, who I nicknamed, "Primo."

He was eighteen and taught me how to write poetry. He was an extremely beautiful person who I loved being around. To this day, we keep in contact.

Going to Belize and living there for a month has helped me mature, and made me realize that there are more interesting places out there, not just the streets of Harlem and New York City. If I had the chance to do it again, I would. ●

This summer, Princess sent StreetSquash Staff Member, Mary Cipollone about her trip to Belize. Here is an excerpt from that e-mail:

"I had a great time in Belize as you said I would...While in Belize I climbed the Mayan ruins, and I climbed the Mayan ruins in Tikal, Guatemala. I absolutely loved my family...My Spanish improved a lot. The language barrier really didn't affect me. I did get home sick at times, and I did feel awkward at times being the only African-American and the 2nd youngest, however I overcame such obstacles. I made friends and was basically laid back the entire trip. I did get into debates about political things which I enjoyed. One time I had to debate with a boy because of his stereotypes about Harlem, but I did it in a sophisticated matter. We successfully built a library. I bonded with the locals great...This trip was life changing."



Princess traveled to Belize with the help of Global Routes' generosity. Central to the Global Routes experience is a homestay with a family in a remote rural village, which allows participants to be immersed in the daily lives and rituals of a culture vastly different from their own. Princess took these photos during her time with her host family, the Ruanos.

A Summer at Camp Dudley



Cody Levy and his mother, Wynessia Levy, at Camp Dudley's visiting day this summer.

Cody Levy

On July 18th, 2005, I went to Camp Dudley in Westport, New York. Pete came to pick me up in front of my building. When I got in the van, I saw my friends Ernesto, Carlos, Angel, and Nicholas. It was a long ride all the way to Camp Dudley. We stopped to get some food, then we drove the rest of the way to camp. Some of us were sleeping in the van. Then we finally got there. We saw two of our fellow StreetSquashers, Raheem and Kevin, who had just finished their four weeks at Dudley.

I stayed in camp for 4 weeks. I stayed in the McClain for two days until my cabin was ready. My cabin's name was Colgate, and I was a senior there.

My number was 19455. My leaders were J.D. Leonard and Sam Slaughter. My friends were Will, Will, Jack, Brett, and Junior.

At Camp Dudley there are many things to do. The Witherbee Theater is where we watched movies or saw a play. You have the main campus, where you could play deathball, basketball, run track, and do all types of sports.

During my free time, I would go to the swim point and I would take swim lessons because I didn't know how to swim. Finally, I tried to swim without the flippers and the life jacket on, and I did it! I had to take another test, which was the boat test. I passed that also. I had never taken a boat test before in my life!

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A Summer at Camp Dudley (continued)

At Camp Dudley you get picked for teams. The team that I was picked for was Team McKeown, and we played basketball, football, lacrosse, soccer, track and field, volleyball, water polo, cross country, and ultimate Frisbee. My individual major was weightlifting and fitness. We had a leader, but I didn't know his real name, so we called him Big Dog.

At 3:30 we had cabin rest everyday, and I would write letters to my family. At my cabin, we also had Vespers at night, and we talked a lot about things that go on in our lives.

The scariest part of camp was my Senior Experience. The reason why it was scary is because it was dark to walk in the woods alone. Finally I was happy because I finished the Senior Experience. Then, I went on a hiking trip and it was hard, because you had to carry a lot of things in your backpack, like clothes, utensils, food, sleeping bags, flashlights, and bug spray. It was too much stuff to carry for 3 days. We took pictures of mountains and waterfalls. At the end of camp, my mom came to visit me, and I was so happy because I had missed her so much. We took more pictures of the mountains. My mother took a picture of the swim point where I swam every day.

On the last day of camp, we had chapel, like we did on Sundays, and we sang a lot of songs. We had Hymn Sing, where we sang all the way through the night. That's where my mother and I took this picture. That moment was the best day of my life, because when you sing the songs, when you read the Bible, and when you say a prayer, it helps to take you through the good stuff that you've done in life, and if you've done bad stuff, you can learn from it. What I learned about myself at Camp Dudley was not to be scared of anything or anyone in camp. The other fellow first! ●

A Week at Talbott Squash Camp

by Asia Giles

This past summer I went to Talbott Squash Camp in Newport, Rhode Island. Ar-Rianna Glover, another member of StreetSquash also went with me. Once we arrived at camp, Ar-rianna and I were very shy because we didn't know anyone there and the other kids knew people. It didn't take us long to adjust, though, because after an hour we had met some people. The kids were very nice and the counselors were too.

We had to wake up at 7:00 am every morning to have breakfast. I didn't like that at all, but I did what I had to do. By 8:00 am we had to be at the squash courts. The squash drills were kind of a challenge for me because I hadn't done any drills like that before. The coaches also had us doing a lot of exercises that made you tired and sore. Then we had an hour lunch break and free time to do whatever we wanted. The food was good also. After we had our free time, we would go back to the courts and play more squash. The coaches had us play

a lot of matches against each other. The squash day ended around 4:00 each afternoon.

Once we got done for the day, we went back to the dorms to get showered and get ready to go out. The first night the counselors brought us movies to watch at the dorms. The second night we went to the movies to see "The Longest Yard." The third through fifth nights we stayed

at the dorms and relaxed. The sixth night we went to see fireworks because it was the Fourth of July. The last night we went to town to go shopping and had a really good time. The area that we stayed in was very beautiful. I really enjoyed myself at Talbott Squash Camp, and I'd recommend to anyone to go there if they want to have a good time, meet new people, and bring up their squash game. ●



Asia Giles and Ar-Rianna Glover, two of our girls at Talbott Squash Camp

Opportunity of a Lifetime

by Asia Navarette



Asia took this photograph while traveling in Panama.

Rapidly, I scrambled to make sure all my belongings were packed. As I arrived at the airport, I realized I was just a few hours away from a trip of a lifetime. It was a two hour ride to a country I had never visited before, and I wasn't sure what was going to happen when I got there. What community service project would be my assignment? Would I like the food? Would I understand the language? Would I encounter dangerous situations? All these thoughts were in my mind, but being nervous was only half of what I felt. Excitement took over when the plane landed on the runway in Panama City. When I met the advisor at the airport gate she said, "Follow me, we are on our way to meet your host family." As she spoke, my feelings of excitement and anxiety collided into a mysterious emotion I had never felt before.

As an exchange student of the American Field Service (AFS) International Program, I was one of the few students that were selected to visit a foreign country. I was exposed to this opportunity through StreetSquash, a program I've been attending for 4 years. As part of AFS, I had to attend multiple

workshops in preparation for abroad travel. While abroad, I was able to explore the province, learn Spanish, and learn about the culture. As a teenager, I thought I would know how to survive on my own, even in another country, but not everything is as easy as it seems.

The experience of living in Panama for a month impacted me in several ways. While there, I endured physical, mental, and intellectual challenges. I worked everyday in the local community rebuilding a school, painting as well as sanding desks and a gate. I had to go through the emotions of leaving the people I am close to for a long time. There were days that I was happy to be in Panama for the experience and exposure, but there were days that I cried to be at home in an environment to which I'd been accustomed. It was a challenge because I had to find new ways to complete tasks, not according to United States culture, but the Panamanian culture. I was challenged to step out of my box and become familiar with the unfamiliar. As a result I became more conscious of how I react in certain situations, and whether

opportunity of a Lifetime (continued from page 1)



Gabrielle Robinson, who also traveled to Panama with AFS, with a friend on the beach during their trip.

they would affect me in a negative or positive way. With this ability to think outside the box and manage my emotions, I was able to adapt more easily and appreciate the time I spent with my host family while in Panama.

Because of my experience in Panama I was able to grow as an individual, I

am a changed young lady, who can now appreciate what I have in the United States: my education, my home, my freedoms, and my culture. I learned that things don't come very easily in other countries, as well as in life, and certain sacrifices must be made. I learned to adapt to different surroundings by using the AFS quote,

"It's not right or wrong, just different." This abroad trip experience has also helped in assisting me on my path to college. By using the key elements I learned about how to interact with people of different races, how to adapt to different living environments, and how to be on my own, I can perfect these skills and use them on my path to finishing college successfully. ●

cover Story (continued)

was no way I could take a shower. Can you image that feeling?! Days went by and believe it or not, I became used to living like this.

I went to this gorgeous island outside of Puerto Rico called Vieques. The water was blue and green, and the sand was crystal white. Our campsite was right in front of the beach, which was the most beautiful place I've ever slept. I was having a good time with the people I was traveling with. We were always chilling and talking about crazy moments that had happened to us. The whole group had a close relationship, which made me feel comfortable to be away from home. After spending four days in Vieques, we went to another beautiful island called Culebra. The beach was so beautiful and calm, which made me speechless at first when I saw it.

When my trip came to an end, I was in a position where I was craving an extra day in Puerto Rico. I had the best time just exploring and doing community service. I learned so much about Puerto Rico and also I learned some words in Spanish. My friends were incredible to live with, and it was a great feeling to get to know so much about other people who you will remember for the rest of your life. This trip was amazing. I wish that I could go back and spend another month there. It was an experience that I will never forget. ●



Sheena Suckoo

A Letter to Future StreetSquashers

by Daequan Andino

Dear Future StreetSquashers

StreetSquash offers great trips where you can experience many different things. The trips range from going to squash camp, doing an outdoor camp, or traveling abroad to countries with poverty issues, and doing fun community service projects there.

In my case, I worked for the StreetSquash Summer Discovery Program as a Junior Staff Member, and I went to Williams College Squash Camp.

Working for almost the whole month of July was really fun. I got to teach new, up-coming StreetSquash members how to play squash, and I also got to know several things about having a job. Working with StreetSquash was my first job ever, and it really gave me a lot of experience. It was amazing!

After working, I went to Williams Squash Camp for one week. I figured, "this is going to be just like Princeton or Harvard Squash Camp." It turned out I was wrong. Williams Squash Camp came with more than squash training. We had many fun experiences, from swimming in a water hole, to learning to play pool with other kids from camp. But after the fun and games, squash training came. An intense work regime and intense squash drilling really helped me improve my game. After that week of squash camp, I had a new grip, backswing, and forehand. It worked out to be really productive.

My experience with StreetSquash will stay with me forever. It changed my personality and made me stronger. I'm sure if you stick with it, it will do the same for you!

**Sincerely,
Senior StreetSquash
Daequan Andino**

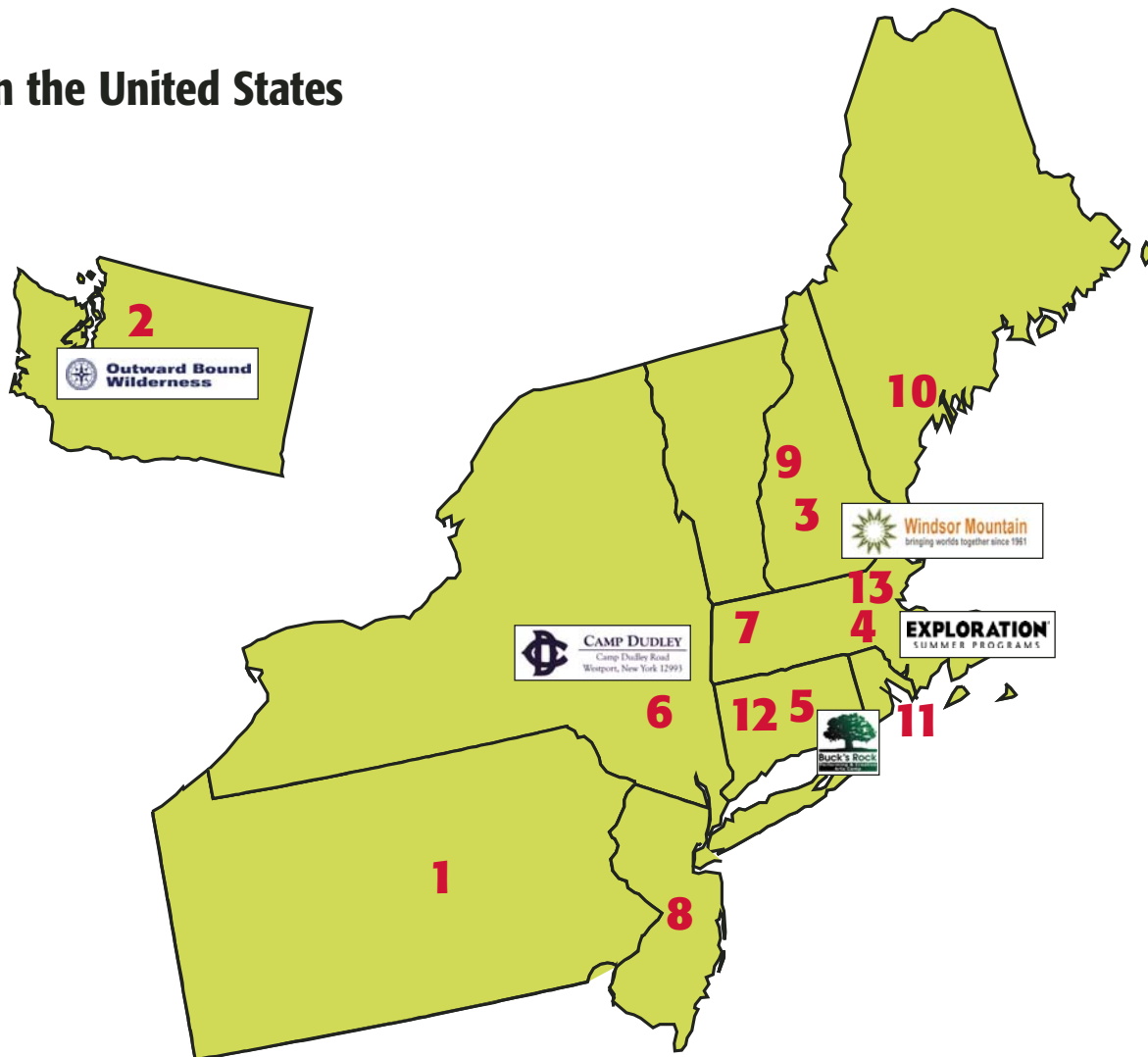


Daequan Andino (center) was decorated to represent a community during StreetSquash's Summer Discovery Program.

Where, oh where, did our StreetSquashers go?

Here's the whole list of summer opportunities StreetSquashers enjoyed in 2005.

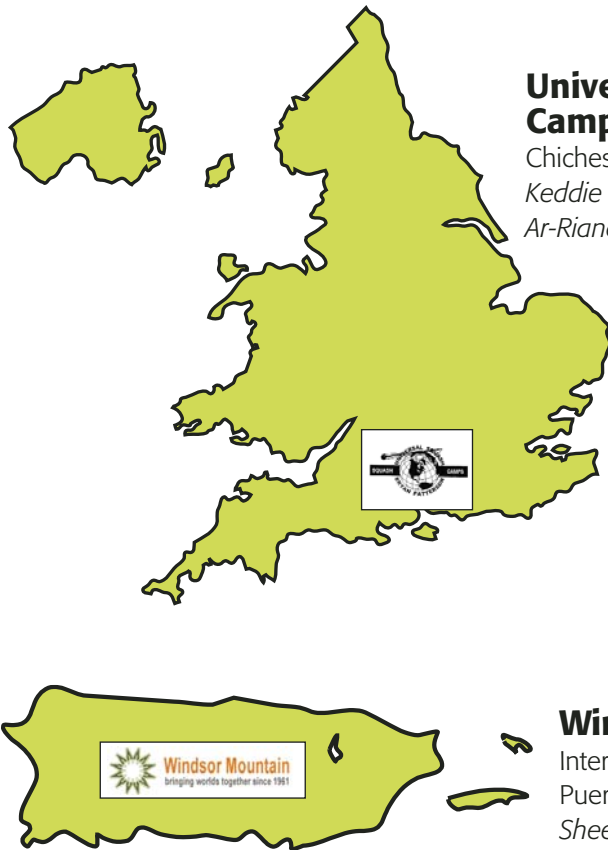
Travel in the United States



Squash Camps

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1. Longacre Leadership Camp
Newport, Pennsylvania
<i>Brandy Robinson</i> | 3. Windsor Mountain International Camp
Windsor, New Hampshire
<i>Talise Hall</i>
<i>Diosmiry Rodriguez</i> | 5. Buck's Rock Performing and Creative Arts Camp
New Milford, Connecticut
<i>Paige Babilonia</i>
<i>Shelby Bozeman</i>
<i>Brussels Mercado</i>
<i>Javen Williams</i> | 6. Camp Dudley
Westport, New York
<i>Kevin Espino</i>
<i>Angel Figueroa</i>
<i>Ernesto Jordan</i>
<i>Cody Levy</i>
<i>Raheem Logan</i>
<i>David Nash</i>
<i>Nicholas Nicholson</i>
<i>Christopher Rowe</i> |
| 2. Outward Bound
Washington State
<i>Rakey Drammeh</i> | 4. Explorations, Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts
<i>Lavonda Howe</i>
<i>Samantha Matos</i> | | |

Travel Abroad



Universal Squash Camp,

Chichester, England
Keddie Valerio
Ar-Riana Glover



Global Routes

Belize
Princess Hardwell



AFS Intercultural Programs

Panama
Asia Navarette
Gabrielle Robinson

Windsor Mountain

International
 Puerto Rico
Sheena Suckoo

7. Squash and Beyond

Williams College
 Williamstown,
 Massachusetts
Daequan Andino
David Nash

8. Princeton Squash Camp

Princeton University
 Princeton, New Jersey
Keith Keith
Raheem Logan

9. Power Squash Camp

Dartmouth College
 Hanover, New Hampshire
Rakey Drammeh
Brussels Mercado

10. Fortson Squash Camp

Bowdoin College
 Brunswick, Maine
Princess Hardwell
Brandy Robinson
Kareem Bridges

11. Talbott Squash Academy

St. George's School
 Newport, Rhode Island
Asia Giles
Ar-Rianna Glover

12. Nike Squash Camp

Trinity College
 Hartford, Connecticut
Talise Hall
Elijah Hardwell
Jennifer Houston

13. Universal Squash Camp

Harvard University
 Cambridge,
 Massachusetts
Ladonis Gaillard
Ernesto Jordan
Carlos Soler

MISSION

Founded in September 1999, StreetSquash is an after-school youth enrichment program that combines academic tutoring, squash instruction, college prep, literacy, community service, and one-on-one mentoring. Working with 140 boys and girls, ages 7 – 18 from Harlem, for a six-year period, the program's goals are: to improve academic performance; to develop an ethic of hard work and commitment; to boost self-confidence; to ensure that all StreetSquash children graduate from high school, enter into post-secondary education, and move on to become active, productive and involved citizens. StreetSquash is a 501(c)3 organization.



An Urban Youth
Enrichment Program

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