

**Vol. 8 2016**  
in this issue

BYSC Athletes Go GaGa  
For GaGa

Coach's Corner

BYSC Benefit Diner

BYSC Teams Up with Tennis  
Innovators

BYSC & City of Mt. Vernon  
Create Rec. Soccer Program

PM Pediatrics Makes a  
House Call in Mt. Vernon

Yoga Provides Omm-Azing  
Afternoons

Volunteer Buzz:  
Featuring Alec Greenwald

BYSC Brings Special Needs  
Sports to Fairfield County, CT

Backyard Sports Cares  
75 South Broadway  
Suite 453  
White Plains, NY 10601

(914) 304-4052  
[byardsportscares.org](http://byardsportscares.org)



Follow Us on Facebook:  
[facebook.com/backyardscares](https://www.facebook.com/backyardscares)



**I**n case you haven't heard of the playground game GaGa, it's the current equivalent of generational games like tetherball, handball, and dodgeball. It's an activity which captivates young players for hours, keeping them moving and engaged. Played at camps and local playgrounds, it's the perfect contest for children of all levels of athletic ability.

At a recent Sunday Special Needs program, Scott Blumberg of Talon Athletics provided a GaGa experience for our players. Talon installed a transportable GaGa pit, an eight sided mini arena of low walls. Players must strike a soft dodge ball, attempting to knock out their teammates while avoiding incoming strikes. Coach Vin Minotti and the BYSC team of coaches provided progressive instruction, teaching the kids to slap and dodge using an assortment of moving targets and bowling pins.

Once inside the GaGa pit, the players enjoyed friendly competition with an opportunity to play against other athletes and their coaches. The reaction from the family spectators was enormous. Parents enjoyed watching their children participate in a game usually only available for typically developing children. Coach Minotti commented, "We are so pleased to be able to expand our offering of competitive activities and provide continuing opportunities for children of all ability levels to play together."



*"We are so pleased to be able to expand our offering of competitive activities and provide continuing opportunities for children of all ability levels to play together."*

*Coach Minotti*

# Coach's Corner

**R**ecently I had the privilege of hearing the inspiring story of Ivan Tchatchouwo, one of the newest additions to the BYSC coaching staff. Ivan grew up in the Bronx where he played high school basketball, and continued with a successful four year college career at Concordia College.



Aggregated injuries over the years quashed Ivan's dream of continuing to play in the NBA D League or overseas. Although profoundly disappointed, Ivan discussed with me his current plans of studying for the MCAT's and "taking his talents" to a medical career. I was struck by the ease of Ivan's transition. He had no regrets about abandoning his dream of playing higher level basketball. Instead, he appreciates the opportunity to remain in the realm of sports.

More importantly, he realized the chance to keep his passion for play alive while using other skill sets to improve the lives of other athletes. Ivan smiled, when I used the term "pivot" as I commented on his career adjustment. Pivot, a basketball term for changing body direction, provided Ivan with a tangible basketball term to explain a new lens for how he viewed his devotion to sports participation. He agreed that too many young players have a limiting single mindedness with their own athletic "end game."

Lowes Moore, my friend and colleague, who is the Director of the Mt. Vernon Boys and Girls Club, recently launched a developmental basketball program called Night Flight. The sessions take place on Friday nights, bringing in talented Mt. Vernon teens to develop and play.

Lowes will use this opportunity not only to train these teenagers, but also to expose them to related careers beyond playing basketball and other professional sports. Introducing them to marketing, manufacturing, health and training will give these athletes the ability to view a multi-faceted window of career choices beyond play. Lowes hopes that by viewing sports through a prism of opportunity individuals can pursue their "hoop dreams" via multiple channels of success.

*Danny Bernstein  
Head Coach, Backyard Sports Cares*

BACKYARD SPORTS CARES BENEFIT

# DINNER

**THU. APRIL 27<sup>TH</sup> • 7-9:30PM**  
**WESTCHESTER REFORM TEMPLE**

BYSC is holding a dinner fundraiser on Thu., April 27<sup>th</sup> at Westchester Reform Temple from 7-9:30pm. Individuals and corporations will have an opportunity to offer financial assistance to our programs.

For More Information, Contact:  
Danny Bernstein: (914) 304-4052

## BYSC Teams Up with Tennis Innovators



Continuing a successful pattern of public/private recreational partnerships, BYSC has teamed up with Tennis Innovators of White Plains to bring Saturday morning tennis instruction to fifteen deserving young girls from the White Plains Youth Bureau. Cesar Andrade, Director of Operations for

Tennis Innovators has graciously opened the doors of his one year old facility located in Del Fino Park adjacent to the Ebersole Ice Rink. Andrade is proud of his facility's ability to bring tennis to an abundance of young players regardless of their socio economic position. He adds, "Tennis is a game which should be played by individuals of all levels of ability and provide a lifetime of fitness and enjoyment. We are thrilled at this opportunity to work with Backyard Sports and the Youth Bureau and hope to plant the seeds for a generation of tennis success." The Tennis Innovator instructors are assisted by the efforts of student volunteers, Olivia Rannard, Matt Steinberg and John Fischgrund



## BYSC & City of Mt. Vernon Create Rec. Soccer Program

To accelerate the growth of recreational soccer within the Mt. Vernon community, the Mt. Vernon Recreation Department, spearheaded

by the Assistant Commissioner, Ricardo Wright asked BYSC to pilot a city soccer program. This program, open to all players in K-8th grade, gives non-travel soccer enthusiasts an opportunity to receive instruction and participate in a competitive league. Special thanks to Luann Gabby of the Mt. Vernon Underdome, for donating the space on Saturday mornings for these kids.

---

## PM Pediatrics Makes a House Call in Mt. Vernon

**D**r. Karin Sadow is a pediatrician and Regional Director for PM Pediatrics, a Mamaroneck-based urgent care facility specializing in treating kids and young adults and a BYSC community partner. She recently visited the children in the Amazing Afternoons program in Mt. Vernon where she engaged two groups of elementary school students in an interactive conversation about identifying and building healthy habits. Topics included sleep, hygiene, snacking and preventive care.

Dr. Karin easily conversed with the participants who provided their own insights and posed thoughtful questions. Many asked when PM Pediatrics would be returning for future health related presentations.

The relationship between BYSC and PM Pediatrics is a dynamic alliance between compassionate local organizations. Both care deeply about the health and welfare of youth and the next generation of leaders. This partnership will allow PM Pediatrics to carry its mission into new neighborhoods that will benefit from the exposure to their health professionals.



---

## Yoga Provides Omm-Azing Afternoons

**T**he Amazing Afternoon Program at the Edward Williams School in Mt. Vernon is the host school once again for a yoga program led by BYSC instructor Brittany Clark. Sessions consist of age appropriate stretches, poses, and movement activities tailored to the K-5th grade participants. Clark points out, “While many programs keep children moving, we also need to provide them with the strategies and modeling to relax and remain composed. Yoga promotes ample opportunities to build healthy relaxation habits which will impact their lives outside of the sessions.” The Amazing Afternoon program is funded by Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS), a leading not for profit that provides services to our County’s challenged population.

---

## Volunteer Buzz: Featuring Alec Greenwald

**A**fter a long weekend of studying, sports, and late nights, I woke up at 8:45 Sunday morning to go to BYSC and spend the next several hours doing something not just to help myself but to try and help others. I walked into the gym a little bit late and saw my pal Kyle, the kid I’ve been working with the past few weeks, shooting baskets. Easily, I walked up to Kyle, asked him about his weekend, and just started playing with him; his face eager and happy to see me again. I knew he was excited because he immediately started talking and was more confident with the ball. Within moments Kyle started to play a slightly altered form of “around the world” where we were just going to different spots around the key and shooting. Each session Kyle impresses me. He can clearly out shoot me despite my long basketball career playing on local leagues. As we reach the larger shots near the free throw line, Kyle is draining shots left and right and I complement him simply remarking, “I like it.” What happened next sums it up; Kyle responded by saying “I like you too.” My face immediately lit up with a smile and I began to giggle. Not only was it funny, complementing his shot and then he returning the favor by telling me he liked me, but it also reinforced why I am always excited to come back each week. I felt appreciated for my efforts but it was also so nice to know I had made a friend. The feeling of being able to say “I made someone’s day better today” exemplifies why I continue to volunteer with BYSC and why it is such a powerful experience for me and for the participants.





75 South Broadway- Suite 453  
White Plains, NY 10601

## Backyard Sports Cares Brings Special Needs Sports to Fairfield County, CT!

**T**his fall, Backyard Sports Cares brought its one of a kind quality sports programming for special needs children to Weston, Connecticut. In a new collaborative partnership with Weston Parks & Recreation, BYSC started a soccer program that was a big hit due to the combined enthusiasm of the participating young athletes and the trained peer mentor volunteers from Weston High School. BYSC appreciates the efforts of Weston Parks and Recreation Program Director Joe Parciasepe, who embraced our “special” program model and who also shares the same view as BYSC; sports should be accessible to everyone, no matter age or ability. Joe is very pleased with the results so far. “I really like the BYSC approach and philosophy of wanting each young athlete to have fun, feel successful and want to come back each week. The participation of high school volunteers makes this program about more than sports and is community building at its best”. BYSC plans to offer more sports like tennis and basketball later this year in Weston and we are looking to forge additional partnerships in Connecticut with other neighboring towns such as Wilton and Westport.



## Join Our Team

### Backyard Sports Cares

is dedicated to providing high quality sports programming to young athletes with limited access to community programs.

For more information about Backyard Sports Cares, please visit:

[www.backyardportscares.org](http://www.backyardportscares.org) or  
call coach Danny Bernstein at  
914-304-4052