



## Child's Play

How often have you heard that phrase used to describe something that's simple, easy? But for thousands of children in the District of Columbia, finding a safe place to play is *far* from easy. That's why the Recreation Wish List Committee (RWLC) was created by Cora Masters Barry, former first lady of Washington, DC.



**Since 1995, the RWLC has raised and provided more than \$3.6 million to help improve and create safe places for children to play, grow and learn in the District of Columbia.** The RWLC has helped build, refurbish or improve recreation centers and neighborhood parks; donated playground and

boxing equipment; and purchased three passenger vans so that the city's children could explore new horizons.

**If our youth are to succeed, we must offer new challenges beyond the competition of the television and the street corner. Our youth need a combination of academic and cultural enrichment programs to give them a chance to thrive and excel.**

**Cora Masters Barry**  
*CEO & Founder,  
Recreation Wish List Committee, and  
Founder,  
Southeast Tennis and Learning Center*

Our greatest, ongoing contribution began in 1999, when Cora Masters Barry launched efforts to build a state-of-the-art tennis and educational facility in the heart of Ward 8. Two years later, the Southeast Tennis and Learning Center (SETLC) opened its doors. Since then, **in partnership with DC's Department of Parks &**

**Recreation, the RWLC has enabled more than 2,000 children and teens to build social and life skills, strengthen academic abilities, and gain the confidence they need to succeed both on and off the tennis courts.**

## Hooked on Learning

While tennis is the hook that often attracts young people to the SETLC, the Center's academic programs quickly captivate them. Largely funded by grants and contributions secured by the RWLC, the Center's year-round educational programs enable children to improve their math and reading skills. They do so through a combination of proven curricula, after-school tutoring, homework assistance, and innovative activities that make learning fun. For example, in 2009 the Center's tennis scholars visited NASA's Goddard Space Center to see how astronauts' suits are made, then used space-age fabrics (and math skills) to create their own fashions. Tennis scholars also challenged their minds—and opponents—by learning the game of chess.

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## Getting Results

Many tennis scholars in the Center's 2008-09 after-school programs saw significant improvements in their grades. Approximately one-third of the students raised their grades by at least one full letter in reading and math, and many more maintained their grades, even as the work grew more challenging.

During the summer, the RWLC supports SETUP, a six-week academic enrichment program that aims to prevent learning loss.

Many children lose weeks or months of knowledge over the summer. But, on average, summer 2009 SETUP participants *increased* their reading comprehension by 25 percent and *doubled* their math proficiency. As a result, they will begin the new school year better-equipped and ready to learn.



## ***From Chains to Change: Chronicling African-American History***

With support from the RWLC, the "Blacks in Wax Museum"—an innovative living-history program at the SETLC—engages children and teens in reading and research to portray current and historic African Americans. During Black History Month 2009, the "museum" featured more than 70 students as statues that came to life at the press of a button, as well as a stage production that chronicled African-American history, *From Chains to Change*. The event was the culmination of months of preparation, as students researched and developed portrayals of prominent

African Americans—from Civil War spy Mary Elizabeth Bowser to 1920s Aviator Bessie Coleman and General Colin Powell, and from Underground Railroad Conductor Harriet Tubman to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Barack Obama. Presented to groups from surrounding schools and more than 500 family members, friends and RWLC supporters, the event gave tennis scholars and audiences a renewed sense of pride in their heritage—and new dreams for the future.



## Promoting Fitness

Besides helping young people improve their minds, the RWLC also promotes better health and fitness among the city's youth. Lack of exercise and safe places to play, poor nutrition, and many hours spent in front of television and computer screens all contribute to

a sharp rise in obesity and associated health problems among the city's children—including type II diabetes, a disease that once afflicted only adults.

In addition to helping improve or expand the number of safe places for children to play in the District of Columbia, the RWLC also supports efforts to educate youth about nutrition and fitness at the SETLC. For example, for SETUP 2009 the RWLC provided software to create *TechnoFit Kids*, a program that encouraged children to eat healthy foods and exercise to get and stay fit.

**For more information about the RWLC and SETLC, visit [www.recreationwishlist.org](http://www.recreationwishlist.org).**



## RWLC & SETLC: Helping Youth Succeed

Our parents always stressed education. At the SETLC, not only are students working hard at their tennis—which they love—but they're also focusing on things even more important in life, such as education and learning values. The Center not only helps you become an athlete, it helps you become a better person. We're proud to be a part of this.

**Serena and Venus Williams**  
*Women's Tennis Champions*

Education is the most important component of the programs at the SETLC. We want young people to learn and have fun but—most importantly—to learn.

**Dr. Julianne Malveaux**  
*President, Bennett College for Women*  
*Treasurer, RWLC Board of Directors*

I'm honored to serve as a member of the RWLC's Board, because I realize what an amazing model the SETLC can be for the rest of the nation. I wish I had a place like this when I was a child.

**Zina Garrison**  
*Former Women's Tennis Champion and*  
*USTA Fed Cup Olympic Coach*  
*Member, RWLC Board of Directors*

Learning was my favorite thing at Camp SETUP. I learned about tennis. I learned about Greece. I learned about math. I love to learn.

**Koraun B.**  
*SETLC Tennis Scholar, Age 9*



**Recreation Wish List Committee**

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**Creating Safe Places for Children to Play, Learn and Grow**



**What Educators, Parents and Kids Say About the  
Recreation Wish List Committee and Southeast Tennis & Learning Center**

We know that when our scholars leave us at the end of the day and head to the Center, they'll find an environment where they will learn to make good choices, to be respectful of others, and to care about their community.

**Shantelle Wright**

*Founder and Head of School,  
Achievement Preparatory Academy*

My daughter has been coming to the Center since she was six years old. RWLC and Center staff genuinely care about the children—and not just one part of their development. The Center isn't just about tennis, it's about educating the whole child. I love that.

**Cassandra Henderson**

*SETLC Parent*

The teachers at the Center taught me that I can do whatever I want, if I put my mind to it. They helped me to believe in myself and motivated me, because they really care. And they taught me how to be a lot better at reading, especially out loud.

**Ta'One W.**

*SETLC Tennis Scholar*

