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## **Researchers Offer Insight into Childhood Obesity**

**Charlottesville, Virginia** (8/3/2015) – QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia ([QCV](http://www.quickstartcentral.org)) is pleased to report researchers from the Michael & Susan Dell Center for Healthy Living at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston School of Public Health Austin Regional Campus recently provided new insights about the causes and effects of childhood obesity. Conclusions in their report\* include:

- 32% of kids ages 6-19 nationwide are overweight or obese.
- Watching television may be an effect not a cause. Overweight or obese children may spend more time in front of the television because of social factors and friendship dynamics that lead them to spend less time with friends and peers. In a study of 2,908 students, the more time children spent with friends, the more they engaged in physical activity, which in turn lowered rates of obesity.
- Obesity has immediate consequences for school performance. Obese children are more likely to have school absences, school problems and lower school engagement than non-overweight children. Obesity in children is also associated with immediate poorer educational outcomes.
- School poverty rates impact all students' odds of being obese. Students in economically disadvantaged schools are 1.7 to 2.4 times more likely to be obese, regardless of their individual family's income.

QCV QuickStart Coordinator Lynda Harrill says, "Tennis is the perfect sport to socialize children. The kid-sized QuickStart Tennis format requires kids to cooperate with each other and build skills before competition enters the picture. Tennis gets kids moving and teaches them life skills in the process. The most important part is QuickStart Tennis is FUN for the kids. They have FUN and can be successful early on, so they stay engaged, wanting to learn more and being active with their friends and classmates."

Another recent study,\*\* funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, correlates the early development of socialization skills in kindergarten with being a responsible, successful adult. In this study, 753 children were followed for 19 years from kindergarten on. Likewise, a USTA Foundation's study\*\*\* of 55,000 high school students documents the superior academic performance, better behavior and community engagement of tennis players across all socio-economic groups.

Harrill adds, "We've intuitively known for years the benefits tennis can provide, but now there's mounting evidence. We've been monitoring research to identify opportunities for tennis to positively impact kids' lives. We are constantly adjusting our goals to take advantage of how learning to play tennis can benefit kids. QCV's QuickStart Pathway

‘Next Level’ schools like Buckingham, Cumberland, Greer, Scottsville and Yancey are examples of how we have targeted economically disadvantaged schools and turned them into ‘tennis schools.’ A pilot with Head Start five years ago led to our current involvement with the Bright Stars program for four year-olds at Greer Elementary. Tennis is an important and unequalled tool in the battle to combat childhood obesity. Our Go Bananas! campaign, which uses tennis players as nutritional role models for kids, is the icing on the cake (and cake is allowed on special occasions).”



**Bright Stars at Greer Elementary have FUN cooperating to build a “tennis sandwich”**

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QuickStart Tennis of Central Virginia is an all-volunteer, grassroots Community Tennis Association established in 2009 as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization to promote, develop and grow QuickStart Tennis in the heart of Virginia for all beginners, especially underserved youth, using the kid-sized QuickStart Tennis format.

QCV’s service area includes Albemarle, Amelia, Appomattox, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Culpeper, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Fluvanna, Franklin, Greene, Greenville, Halifax, Henry, Louisa, Lunenburg, Madison, Mecklenburg, Nelson, Nottoway, Orange, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Prince Edward, Powhatan and Rappahannock counties and the cities of Charlottesville, Danville and Martinsville. We currently serve 141 schools with 67,000 kids, nine parks & recreation departments, three Boys & Girls Clubs and two YMCAs in 27 counties and three independent cities. We have also gotten tennis into PE classes in 30 additional schools with 14,000 students in southwestern and eastern central Virginia as part of the Mid-Atlantic Supercharge School Tennis Task Force.

Visit QCV at: [www.quickstartcentral.org](http://www.quickstartcentral.org) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/quickstartcentral).

\* "The Science of Childhood Obesity: An Individual to Societal Framework," *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity* (special issue on obesity) (July 27, 2015).

\*\* "Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health: The Relationship Between Kindergarten Social Competence and Future Wellness," *American Journal of Public Health* (July 16, 2015)

\*\*\* "More than a Sport: Tennis, Education & Health," *USTA Serves (now USTA Foundation) Special Report* (February 21, 2013).



*A racquet in every hand! A smile on every face!*

