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## **RISING AMERICAN STAR CHRISTINA MCHALE HOSTS FIRST NIAGARA TENNIS BLOCK PARTY WITH 200 KIDS IN NEW HAVEN DIXWELL/NEWHALLVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD**

### ***McHale Receives Wild Card Into New Haven Open At Yale Presented By First Niagara***

**NEW HAVEN, Conn., July 13, 2011** – The “First Niagara Tennis Block Party” was a huge success, welcoming approximately 200 kids from the Dixwell/Newhallville neighborhood of New Haven to a free USTA 10 & Under tennis clinic at the Wexler-Grant School with WTA pro and rising American star Christina McHale. In addition, each child was sent home with a free tennis racquet, courtesy of First Niagara to help make it even easier to pursue the sport.

This is the second time that First Niagara has given away racquets. Just a month ago they supplied 300 local New Haven school children with racquets during the First Niagara Free Tennis Lesson. After the first giveaway, New Haven Parks and Recreation saw a 30% increase in enrollment for their affordable summer tennis lessons.

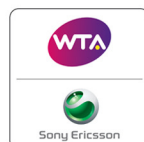
The “Block Party” was the first time that the New Haven Open has taken their clinic to a particular neighborhood in New Haven. The purpose was to expose kids to the sport, the importance of fitness in their lives and to create awareness for a new “Tennis in the Neighborhood” program offered by New Haven Youth Tennis & Education August 8-12 in the Dixwell/Newhallville neighborhood. The program is being made possible by a grant from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven.

“First Niagara has always been committed to helping children learn, grow and achieve their dreams,” said Paul McCraven, First Niagara’s Senior Vice President of Community Development. “We are thrilled to be able to give back to more local children and follow up the success we had with the Free Lesson in June. A big thank you goes out to Christina McHale for her support with this event as well.”

McHale, a 19-year-old from New Jersey, has also been granted a main-draw wild card for the New Haven Open, a WTA event that is part of the Olympus US Open Series to be held August 18-27 at the Connecticut Tennis Center at Yale. She has recently hit a career-high ranking of No. 66 after defeating a top-30 seeded player to reach the second round of Wimbledon. The third-ranked American holds wins over multiple former top-10 players including 2011 New Haven Open competitors Svetlana Kuznetsova, Daniela Hantuchova and Nadia Petrova.

“We always say that our fans can count on seeing the rising stars at the New Haven Open and Christina McHale is exactly that,” said Tournament Director Anne Worcester. “She is a talented player and definitely someone to watch this year. We are grateful that she took time out of her busy schedule to help us bring tennis into a New Haven neighborhood with the goal of introducing kids to tennis as well as the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle.”

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## **New Haven Open at Yale – McHale/Block Party p. 2**

In addition, this evening McHale will attend the New Haven Open “Preview Party,” being held at Heirloom in The Study at Yale. The event will offer guests the chance to sample what’s new and different about the tournament this year from players (women-only) to food (the tournament will showcase the new BBQ Bash, part of the expanded New Haven Food & Wine Festival) to off-court entertainment (musical guest Seth Adams will perform) to cause-related programs (anyone purchasing hospitality or a box seat this evening will have a portion of the proceeds donated to the Connecticut Affiliate Susan G. Komen for the Cure and the Smilow Cancer Hospital at Yale-New Haven).

For tickets, how to become a volunteer, or more information about the tournament, please call the New Haven Open at Yale Box Office, 800-855-4-NHTENNIS or visit [www.newhavenopen.com](http://www.newhavenopen.com).

### **About New Haven Open at Yale presented by First Niagara**

New Haven Open at Yale presented by First Niagara has always been much more than a tennis tournament; it is a leading example of leveraging a large-scale international sporting event to generate \$26 million in regional economic impact and to build community pride, spirit and engagement, especially among youth. The 2011 tournament, which will feature World No. 1 and three-time defending champion Caroline Wozniacki and two Grand Slam champions Francesca Schiavone and Svetlana Kuznetsova, is a women’s-only WTA event that is part of the Olympus US Open Series and will be held August 18-27 at the Connecticut Tennis Center at Yale. This year the tournament has added the US Open National Playoffs Championships, the culmination of 16 sectional qualifying tournaments that provide the opportunity for all players 14 years of age and older to earn a berth into the US Open in men’s and women’s singles and mixed doubles. The New Haven Open is prominently featured domestically on ESPN2 and also broadcast around the world. For more information about the tournament and tickets, visit [www.newhavenopen.com](http://www.newhavenopen.com) or call 1-855-4-NHTENNIS.

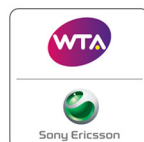
### **About First Niagara Financial Group**

As of April 25th, First Niagara Financial Group, Inc., through its wholly owned subsidiary, First Niagara Bank, N.A., has \$30 billion in assets, 346 branches and \$18 billion in deposits. First Niagara Bank, N.A. is a multi-state community-oriented bank providing financial services to individuals, families and businesses across Upstate New York, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and Massachusetts. For more information, visit [www.fnfg.com](http://www.fnfg.com).

### **About the Olympus US Open Series**

The Olympus US Open Series has established itself as a true regular season of hard court tennis, linking 10 summer tournaments to the US Open. Fans follow the action throughout the summer through national television coverage, culminating each week with back-to-back men’s and women’s finals every Sunday afternoon. Players battle for \$40 million, including a chance for bonus prize money at the US Open. In 2008, Olympus became the first title sponsor of the Series. The Olympus US Open Series is also supported by sponsors American Express and Evian.

Andy Murray won the 2010 Olympus US Open Series men’s title and Caroline Wozniacki won the women’s title. In 2007, Roger Federer collected the biggest paycheck in tennis history -- \$2.4 million -- for winning US Open and the Olympus US Open Series. In 2005, Kim Clijsters also captured both the US Open and the Olympus US Open





Series, winning \$2.2 million -- the largest purse in women's sports history -- and again equaled that amount in 2010, winning the US Open and finishing the Olympus US Open Series in second place.

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