



Contact: Matt Van Tuinen
MVT PR
312-235-3291
matt@mvtpr.com

10TH ANNUAL FIRST NIAGARA FREE TENNIS LESSON ENGAGES 300 NEW HAVEN SCHOOL CHILDREN

First Niagara Gives Participants Free Racquets To Encourage Participation & Healthy Choices

NEW HAVEN, Conn., June 16, 2011 – Today, the New Haven Open at Yale presented by First Niagara conducted the 10th annual First Niagara Free Tennis Lesson for 300 first and second graders from the New Haven school district. For the first time in the history of the event, every youngster who participated received a free tennis racquet, courtesy of First Niagara. The New Haven Open is a WTA event that is part of the Olympus US Open Series to be held August 18-27, 2011 at the Connecticut Tennis Center at Yale.

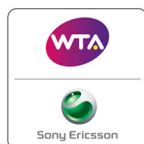
"First Niagara is committed to helping children learn, grow and achieve their dreams," said First Niagara Regional President David Ring, "We are proud to be the presenting sponsor of the New Haven Open at Yale and, in turn, support community tennis programs like the Free Tennis Lesson. It's wonderful to be a part of a program in which local youth learn about a healthy lifestyle while still having fun on the tennis court!"

The Free Tennis Lesson utilized smaller courts and racquets as well as slower, lighter balls that are part of the USTA's national "10 and Under Tennis" initiative utilizing the QuickStart format. This initiative is designed to help children develop proper strokes and allow young players to engage in rallies and have fun right from the start.

"Today's First Niagara Free Tennis Lesson is just one example of how the New Haven Open's strategy is to leverage the excitement of professional tennis to grow participation at the community level, especially among youth," said Tournament Director Anne Worcester. "But it's not all about creating tennis players, it's about providing opportunities for kids that teach them the importance of fitness and making healthy choices in their lives."

One example of the burgeoning tennis scene in New Haven is the local 8 & Under USTA Jr. Team Tennis Team, who were honored today during the Free Tennis Lesson. In their inaugural season in 2010, the NEW HAVEN STARS won the State Championship in the summer season and captured second place in the winter season. The team was created by and is part of New Haven Youth Tennis & Education, a non-profit organization that grew out of the tournament's community outreach efforts and, which provides life-skills, mentoring, educational support and tennis programming to youth in New Haven.

At the end of the clinic, the kids also received cinch bags from Cornerstone Sponsor Aetna and tennis balls from USTA New England. All participants were encouraged to sign up for affordable summer tennis lessons through New Haven Parks & Rec. Thanks to a partnership among USTA New England, New Haven Open and Parks & Rec, New Haven youth have access to year-round tennis programs at affordable prices. To date, more than 5,000 New Haven youth have participated in these lessons.





-more-

p. 2 New Haven Open at Yale – Free Tennis Lesson

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, 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. The tournament is prominently featured domestically on ESPN2 and also broadcast around the world. For more information about the tournament and tickets, visit www.newhavenopen.com or call 800-855-4-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.

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.

###

