



## **Stamford Peace Basketball Club Expands Its Beyond Limits Academic Program**

Program Offers One-on-One Peer Tutoring to Stamford Peace Student-Athletes and Other Stamford Public Schools Students

**STAMFORD, Conn., February 24, 2015**—Stamford Peace Basketball Club, Inc. (Stamford Peace), a high-level local and travel basketball program serving boys and girls from first through eleventh grade in lower Fairfield County, today announced the expansion of its Beyond Limits Academic Program. The program, which Stamford Peace began in 2013 by offering one-on-one tutoring assistance to its student-athletes, has expanded to provide highly subsidized tutoring and informal mentoring to other students attending Stamford Public Schools.

Tutoring is conducted by Stamford Public Schools' upperclassmen, including National Honor Society members, who are referred by teachers and administrators. Tutoring sessions are scheduled on weekday afternoons and evenings and on Saturdays. One-hour sessions are conducted at Stamford Peace's Long Ridge Road offices, which include a classroom equipped with computers, school supplies and reference books. The facility also provides a lounge area with Wi-Fi for parents, a kitchen area with complimentary snacks and beverages, and a fitness room. Subsidized fees range from \$2 to \$16 per hour, with a 50 percent discount for students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

The Beyond Limits program is dedicated to enhancing opportunities for academic success. "Despite our community's capacity to address opportunity gaps, we continue to struggle in offering economically disadvantaged families the additional resources they need to succeed," said Andy Sklover, Co-Founder of the Beyond Limits program. "This is a small step toward a considerably larger effort needed to level the playing field for all local families," he said.

Since its inception, the Beyond Limits program has grown from tutoring approximately 5 middle and high school students to more than 10 tutors and approximately 30 students, and is continually expanding. Tutoring sessions include a review of coursework, test preparation, and related academic projects, with a focus on helping students increase their understanding of math and science concepts and content.

Stamford High School senior, and member of the National Honor Society, Becca Rakowitz, has been tutoring Jerome Atkinson, a Stamford High School Sophomore, for the past year. "He was the first student I tutored," says Rakowitz. "I think Jerome is a lot more confident now with his skills than when we first started," she says. "It's rewarding to teach some of the techniques other teachers have taught me—that the students I tutor may not know about—and be able to pass on that information," she adds.



Becca Rakowitz, a 17-year-old senior at Stamford High School, tutors Stamford High School Sophomore, Jerome Atkinson, 15, in chemistry. Photo credit: Margaret Hart

Atkinson agrees that the tutoring program has helped him become a more confident student. “When I started last year, my studying skills were not good. The tutoring has helped me do better in my classes, and prepare for my tests,” he says.

His mother also sees progress. “I’ve seen improvement in his grades and in his focus,” says Erica Perkins, explaining how Jerome was struggling with math and science before starting the Beyond Limits program. “He can relate to the tutors because they are high school students close in age to him,” she continues, “and I don’t have to fight him to come here; so that tells me that he likes it,” she says.

A core component of the Beyond Limits Academic Program is frequent communication with participating parents to engage them, as well as to obtain program feedback. Families complete a Program Agreement in which they agree to provide Beyond Limits with Progress Reports and Report Cards to track development. In a recent Beyond Limits parent survey, a substantial majority of parents reported being “very satisfied,” and rated the quality of the tutors as “excellent.”

Vanessa Carroll, whose daughter Laura is a freshman at Westhill High School, has been working with a Beyond Limits tutor twice a week since January to help improve her geometry skills. “This program has helped her not only academically, but also to meet seniors and talk with them about school, and life in general,” she says. “I definitely think the mentoring is a big plus. She was much more comfortable at Westhill because of conversations she had with her tutor right before mid-term exams.”





Fourteen-year-old Stamford High School Freshman, Laura Carroll (left), meets with 17-year-old Stamford High School senior, and Beyond Limits tutor, Brianna Samaranayake. Photo credit: Margaret Hart

“In addition to making academic supports available to more students, our goals are to provide an environment free from distraction and negative peer influences,” said Andy Sklover. “We want our students to feel comfortable and confident in their ability to succeed,” he said.

Stamford High School senior, and tutor, Brianna Samaranayake, says she enjoys the welcoming atmosphere. “The environment is friendly, and we don’t put pressure on the students; we focus on understanding and giving them confidence,” she says.

Carroll and her daughter learned about the tutoring program from her daughter’s Westhill basketball coach, Brian Kriftcher, who is a Co-Founder of Beyond Limits, as well as the Founder of Stamford Peace. “Coach K is a great mentor for the kids,” says Mrs. Carroll.

“Major college athletic programs at all levels routinely make academic supports and advisement readily available to their student-athletes,” said Kriftcher. “Our Beyond Limits Academic Program is modeled on that holistic approach.”

“There are a myriad of private resources available to affluent families looking to get ahead in a more competitive academic and college preparatory landscape,” added Kriftcher. “We believe we have a responsibility to ensure that families of less affluence have those same opportunities available to them.”

For more information about the Beyond Limits tutoring program and/or to schedule an orientation meeting, please contact Andy Sklover at: [andy@beyonlimitsacademics.org](mailto:andy@beyonlimitsacademics.org) or call: (203) 588-9023.

### **About Beyond Limits Academic Program**

Founded in 2013, the Beyond Limits Academic Program is dedicated to enhancing opportunities for academic success. The program currently provides math and science tutoring, and informal peer mentoring. Tutors are recruited from among Stamford Public High Schools and work one-on-one with Stamford Peace student-athletes and other Stamford Public Schools students. Fees are highly subsidized, and students who receive free or reduced-price lunch qualify for a 50 percent reduction of the already subsidized fees.

### **About Stamford Peace**

Founded in 2008, Stamford Peace offers innovative basketball programming for boys and girls ages 5 to 17, from in and around lower Fairfield County, Connecticut. Stamford Peace uses high-level basketball competition, training and instruction as a means of teaching the importance of education and other essential life skills to students from diverse socioeconomic, religious, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Among the life lessons emphasized to participants in the Stamford Peace program are the value of teamwork, discipline, a strong work ethic, personal integrity, sportsmanship and resiliency. The broad pursuit of excellence—on and off the basketball court—is a cornerstone of the Stamford Peace program. For additional information, please call (203) 588-9020 or visit the Stamford Peace website at: [www.stamfordpeace.com](http://www.stamfordpeace.com).