



IN THE NEWS @TRIANGLE

Gigi’s Playhouse partnership brings joy this summer

Triangle Serves Reflection by Katie Slay '10 (Penn State):



Has your day ever been made just because of the people you were around? Ours has every time we participate in Triangle Volleyball Club’s Summer Camp for [GiGi’s Playhouse](#). GiGi’s Playhouse, a Down’s Syndrome Achievement Center, is a place that individuals with Down syndrome, their families, and the people in the community can call home. Volunteers generously offer their time to create exceptional programming and provide support for individuals with Down syndrome and their families. Jenna Hinton, Assistant Director of Triangle Volleyball Club in Raleigh, NC, partnered with GiGi’s Playhouse to provide adult and youth summer volleyball camps (with a fair share of dance breaks mixed in). Each experience has been nothing short of uplifting.

The athletes from GiGi’s change our perspective on all that the sport of volleyball can bring to your life. When we see their beaming, ear-to-ear grin when they hit the ball over the net for the first time, we’re reminded that volleyball is a game to be enjoyed. Their smile is so infectious that we can’t help but be excited right along with them. As the athletes and their volunteer ‘buddies’ complete the stations, we see the bonding relationships that can be formed between people from all walks of life through sport as we encourage and support one another. When the athletes laugh at their mistakes and are just as ready to try again, we appreciate that the gym is a place where we shouldn’t be afraid to try new things. Mistakes can be a great opportunity to not only learn, but to laugh at yourself. That playful perspective is perhaps the most refreshing reminder to us players and coaches that can sometimes forget what the game should be all about.

We’re inspired each time we have the privilege to work with these athletes and the lead volunteers from GiGi’s. The lead volunteers from GiGi’s respect and empower all of the members of their program, and are always seeking ways to provide them with opportunities to learn, lead, and grow. For example, they have an internship program for adults. So, one athlete that we worked with in the adult group had the opportunity to come to camp with the youth group in a counselor role. It was fun to see her be a leader for the younger group, and it’s another reminder that our sport can provide countless experiences beyond learning how to pass a volleyball to target.



GiGi’s athletes remind us that we have more in common with one another than we may think. Our differences are only as dividing as we allow them to be. We may be teaching these athletes about volleyball, but they’re teaching us about life.

Katie Slay is a Triangle alum from the Class of 2010. As a junior club player Slay was selected to the USA Women's Junior National Team her sophomore and junior year who won the NORCECA Continental Championship in Mexico. Slay was a middle blocker at Penn State University where she and the Nittany Lions won NCAA Division I National Championships in 2010 and 2013. Slay is a three-time AVCA All-American (2-2nd, 1-3rd). She went on to play two years professionally on the international circuit; Dresdner Sports Club 1898 (Germany) and Vannes Volleyball (France). Slay returned to the U.S. to pursue her master’s in communication sciences and disorders. Slay is a contracted speech therapist for the Wake County public school system.

Triangle Volleyball Club, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was founded in 2002 and is dedicated to ‘educating the whole person through excellence in the sport of volleyball.’ *Triangle* is equally committed to growing the sport of volleyball in North Carolina and has expanded its programs and offerings, leading the way for NC junior girls’ volleyball. *Triangle Volleyball Club* is a member of the Carolina Region of USA Volleyball, the national volleyball organization of the U.S. Olympic program, Junior Volleyball Association [JVA], American Volleyball Coaches Association [AVCA], National Council of Youth Sports, Mid-Atlantic Power League [MAPL], and a designated partner with Bridge II Sports Paralympic Sports Club. Links: trianglevolleyball.org, usavolleyball.org, carolinaregionvb.org, www.avca.org, jvaonline.org, ncvs.org, maplvb.com, bridge2sports.org.