



Mike Lewitt, President Youth Tennis Foundation, Ned Weld Award winner Jake Agna, and Peter Parrotta, President & CEO USTA New England

### **Jake Agna Presented 2018 Ned Weld Award at the Newport Tennis Hall of Fame**

Each year, the Youth Tennis Foundation of New England honors the legacy of Ned Weld, a former number #1 New England player, and former YTF president. Ned was an avid tennis competitor and tireless champion for helping kids through tennis. The Ned Weld award goes to someone who personifies those same virtues.

From the time **Jake Agna** got his first wooden Jack Kramer racquet at age 5, no one in rural Yellow Springs, Ohio was safe. If you said 'hello' to Jake, he would drag you out onto the city courts. Jake became a runner-up in High School State Doubles Champ State champion for the state of Ohio. Cincinnati's Queen City Racquet Club recruited Jake as head teaching professional at age 19.

In the late 90's, as a veteran teaching pro in Burlington Vermont, Jake decided to add under-served youth to his successful junior development program. "That's when " says Jake, "I saw what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. To bring tennis to kids who weren't going to get it otherwise."

In the year 2000, Jake Agna created 'Kids on the Ball'. Jake's goal was simple; 'if they show up for the first time on Friday, we want to see them back on Monday morning.'

Today, the 'Kids On the Ball' program serves 1200 kids in Burlington VT, many more in Springfield MA, New Orleans, and Havana Cuba.

Jake's programs have been described as "the happy musical sounds of tennis balls, laughter and children's voices, in different languages. A mixture of refugee, inner city and suburban youth, including many new arrivals from Syria."

The entire New England Tennis Community and the YTF thanks Jake Agna for his passion and devotion in bringing tennis to kids who surely would not have it without him.

Mike Lewitt, President of the Youth Tennis Foundation of New England and presenter of the award sums up Jake:

"Jake's love and purpose seems to travel independently through the airwaves. Anywhere you turn, to USTA, to Vermont tennis people—you pick up a smile in peoples' words about Jake. I particularly love the part on your website video where Jake says "When I go down to the park I just want to have a lot of friends."

For more information about Jake and Kids on the Ball visit:

[www.kidsontheball.com](http://www.kidsontheball.com)

