

LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

After a pandemic-induced tennis hiatus, teen friends Alek Karagozyan and Tait and Cole Oberg realized how much the sport enriched their lives on—and off—the court. With a desire to help others and share their passion, the three boys founded Rally For Tennis (RFT, rallyfortennis.com), a nonprofit focused on raising awareness and financial support for aspiring tennis players in under-resourced communities. Just this year, they collected nearly \$70,000 for at-risk youth organization Advantage Kids, with the help of over 500 donors and events in New England and New Jersey. Here, Tait dishes on the RFT's beginnings and lofty goals for the future.

BY MADISON DUDDY



From left: Founders Tait Oberg, Alek Karagozyan and Cole Oberg; the trio are bringing the game of tennis to more communities—inspiring more children to learn the sport.

What inspired you to start Rally For Tennis?

Having lost the ability to play during the pandemic, we recognized the impact tennis has on our lives and how fortunate we are to have access to a sport that introduced us to a community of friends and taught us many important life lessons. We wanted to ensure this opportunity was available to those in under-resourced communities and, through a mutual friend, learned about Advantage Kids.

How does it feel to share something you love while helping those in need?

When we are working with these athletes and seeing the smiles on their faces, there is nothing better. Their energy and enthusiasm to learn and be a part of something bigger than themselves is contagious. Being able to help, in some small way, to make tennis more accessible to these deserving athletes feels fantastic.

Did you expect Rally For Tennis to be this successful?

Honestly, no. At first, we were just excited about the idea of making a difference in our local community. However, over the last two years, the RFT organization has grown on many levels. After a successful inaugural event in 2021 and

much excitement in the tennis community, we felt confident that our mission to bring tennis to those in under-resourced communities was shared by many.

What has been the most valuable lesson you've taken from Rally For Tennis?

Never underestimate the positive impact that a person can make in the life of someone else if they are passionate about helping. The idea of RFT was started less than two years ago with the three of us on a Zoom call, and this August we raised over \$69,000 from over 500 people to help under-resourced communities bring tennis to their youth.

What do you hope for the future of the program?

We hope that the mission of RFT will permeate throughout the country and create new friendships and mentorships across all aspiring tennis players, regardless of their communities.



FROM LEFT, PHOTOS: COURTESY OF RALLY FOR TENNIS; BY TODD TRAPANI