

# Joburg's open spaces to become squash courts

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PARKS in the Joburg CBD as well as empty stands and parking areas are set to become sports grounds for the youth.

Yesterday, a project called "Street Racket" was launched by Egoli Squash, which said the benefits were that no specific court or expensive equipment were required and that mobile courts can be set up anywhere within minutes and on any surface.

All that is needed is some chalk to draw the court on solid ground, and a simple racket.

"We are turning parking lots, open spaces and any areas into sports opportunities, which can be active sports grounds 24-hours a day," said Glenn Lazarus, director of Egoli Squash.

Yesterday the first group of coaches was certified. They will visit inner-city communities, equipped with rackets and chalk to demarcate the courts and teach youths to play squash.

Lazarus said the sport had become popular in the city with some 22 schools in Doornfontein, the CBD and inner-city areas already involved.

"It has grown to such an extent that some of the youngsters we have

coached have made it to provincial level. Squash not only promotes physical health, but it teaches basic life skills including arithmetic," he said.

The wooden rackets are being made locally and will be sponsored, but in the long term Lazarus hopes to establish centres using the families of local participants to make the bats.

Egoli Squash is a registered public benefit outreach programme of Central Gauteng Squash, and uses squash to "curb the vicious cycle of poverty and crime for disadvantaged youth from as young as eight from the communities of Alexandra, Soweto and the inner city", he said.

This outreach project of Central Gauteng Squash was established in 2009.

"The development of squash is a platform used to address the youth and the issues affecting them and their communities, as well as to revive the spirit of 'ubuntu' among our youth, as they are the future of the country.

"There is an urgent need to empower young people, especially in the Joburg inner city Soweto and Alex communities where family units are being broken down, households are struggling with high unemployment, and the youth



**GREAT FUN:** S bonginkosi Khumalo, 6, plays Street Dots, a game which helps with solving mathematical problems. The new innovative Swiss sport – Street Racket – has been introduced to the children of Doornfontein.

PICTURE:  
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are exposed to environments with crime and violence nearly every day of their lives," he said.

Over the years, Egoli Squash has helped 5 000 youths in the Joburg areas.

"The children are taught to have high self-esteem and appreciate themselves in order to reach and achieve their goals and dreams. We discourage divisions, gangs and crime, and we enforce respect.

Children are encouraged to build good relationships at all levels at school, sport centres, communities and with their parents."

Lazarus said that in a country well-known for its sporting prowess, many learners at township and inner-city schools were not receiving the benefits of physical and sporting development.

"Schools do not have adequate resources to offer extra-mural or

sports development facilities.

"We are working hard to reverse this condition by making squash a sport that is accessible and helps to increase a disadvantaged child's chances of achieving excellence in sport, at school and in life," he said.

The organisation focuses on enabling teachers, sports co-ordinators and coaches to develop skills and competencies.

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