



**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 17, 2021**

ESPN & LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS BUILD AND OPEN MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPORTS SPACE IN SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

- *YMCA of San Juan celebrates the opening of courts that will be home to sustainable programs teaching young people life-skills through sports*
- *Puerto Rican Olympic Gold Medalist Monica Puig helps opens the space during special event*

San Juan, Puerto Rico: At a special virtual event on Tuesday, August 17, ESPN and partners officially opened a newly transformed multifunctional sports space dedicated to the local community and its residents. The site is the tenth in the global *Built to Play* project series, led by ESPN. Partners on the project include the local community, award-winning sport for development organizations love.fútbol and Coaches Across Continents, the YMCA of San Juan, the Puerto Rico Tennis Association (PRTA) and United States Tennis Association (USTA).

Encompassing a revitalization and beautification of courts located at the YMCA San Juan, the space is designed to provide a safe place to play for the surrounding community and to offer ongoing programming using the power of sports to educate young people on key local and personal development issues.

Hosted by **Marly Rivera**, ESPN's Major League Baseball National Reporter, the virtual media event and ribbon-cutting was attended by special guest speaker, professional tennis player and 2016 Olympic Gold Medalist, **Monica Puig**; **Freddy Rolón**, Vice President, ESPN Programming and Acquisitions; **Rosa María Martínez**, Executive Director, USTA Caribbean and PRTA; **Mabel Román Padró**, Executive Director, YMCA of San Juan; and, **Mano Silva**, Chief Operating Officer, love.fútbol.

"I have always believed that we do our best work when we can use the power of the ESPN brand to serve as an agent of change and bring positive impact to communities," said **Freddy Rolón**. "We were pleased to bring ESPN Built to Play to the YMCA of San Juan and to collaborate with love.fútbol, Coaches Across Continents, the local community, the YMCA and the PRTA to provide a space in a community where there is a need and where it can truly make a difference. I know that it will continue to be a focal point for this community for many years to come; a place where kids can play sports, have fun, learn, and thrive.

The virtual event celebrated the site and featured remarks from the project partners on its social impact on the G8 community. It also included a special Q&A between Olympic champion Monica Puig and two children from the USTA Foundation's local National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) chapter.

Monica Puig said, "It is an honor to be part of this great initiative. I want to thank ESPN Built to Play, the YMCA of San Juan, the PRTA, and everyone involved for making a difference not only through the sport of tennis but through sports overall to help improve the health and wellness of our youth. It's been very special for me to see the growth of interest in tennis in Puerto Rico ever since I won the gold medal, especially among kids. Sports, in general, are a great resource for kids to learn life skills, stay active and also deal with mental health issues, which are especially timely with the pandemic. Thanks to this project, the kids in the community will have this as a safe haven to go outside, stay active, explore their passions and talents, and simply be kids."

By fostering a more inclusive community and ensuring quality programming, this space will serve as a hub for local youth to play, participate in skills-development programs, and grow. The project engages the G8 community and YMCA members through a variety of sports – including new opportunities to play and learn through tennis and football - and activities for different ages, but mainly targeting boys and girls aged 6 to 15-years-old. Parents will also be part of the process. Project manager love.fútbol led the transformation of the space and programming partner Coaches Across Continents virtually trained local expert coaches - including Fundación Golitos, which runs adapted sports program for children with disabilities - on its customized Purposeful Play curriculum. The programming will be used to facilitate powerful discussions with youth around leadership, mental well-being, healthy living, and social inclusion. From August 2021– August 2022, the coaches will deliver weekly sessions reaching at least 600 young people monthly in full compliance with COVID-19 restrictions.

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS:

ESPN Corporate Citizenship: ESPN believes that, at its very best, sports uplift the human spirit. Its corporate citizenship programs use the power of sport to positively address society's needs through strategic community investments, cause marketing programs, collaboration with sports organizations and employee volunteerism, while also utilizing its diverse media assets. To date, ESPN has done ESPN Built to Play in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and India, and will be launching one in Nigeria later this year.

love.fútbol: love.fútbol is an award-winning non-profit dedicated to a safe place to play soccer for every child. The organization engages, mobilizes and partners with communities to plan, build, manage and redefine their own sports spaces as hubs for passion, education and development. Through the passion and power of the world's most popular game, love.fútbol engages communities to ensure that every child has a place to play. Since 2006, love.fútbol has partnered with some of the biggest names in sport, business and non-profit to create safe sports spaces across five continents for nearly 70,000 children, youth and adults to be active, connect, grow and learn.

YMCA of San Juan: Better known as the "Y," YMCA of San Juan is a 501(c)3 non-profit social welfare institution affiliated with the YMCA movement in the United States. Every day, the organization works with its people to ensure that everyone, regardless of age, income or background, has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. With 108 years of foundation in Puerto Rico, the institution serves over 5,000 people annually, through programs aimed at infants, children, youth, adults, people with disabilities and the elderly. Its mission is summarized in the strengthening of communities through three focus areas: youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.

USTA and USTA Foundation: The USTA is the national governing body for the sport of tennis in the U.S. and the leader in promoting and developing the growth of tennis at every level -- from local communities to the highest level of the professional game. A not-for-profit organization with more than 655,000 members, it invests 100% of its proceeds in growing the game.

USTA Foundation, the national charitable arm of the USTA, provides grants and scholarships in addition to supporting tennis and education programs nationwide to benefit under-resourced youth through the National Junior Tennis & Learning (NJTL) network. The NJTL network features more than 250 chapters across the country that reach more than 160,000 young people annually.

Puerto Rico Tennis Association: The Puerto Rico Tennis Association (PRTA) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to promote and develop tennis in Puerto Rico through recreational programs, intermediate and advanced tournaments for all ages, and strategic alliances with national and international organizations. The PRTA has been an NJTL chapter since 2001.

Coaches Across Continents: Coaches Across Continents is an award-winning non-profit focused on education and community development. Its Purposeful Play curriculum and Education Outside the Classroom (EOC) methodology supports communities to design pathways towards social change based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals. EOC empowers communities, organizations, leaders and young people to analyze their needs and implement strategies to choose their futures. CAC has trained and certified 25,000+ community coaches and leaders, and annually, provides quality education for over 16 million youth.