

Sports

Gannett Newspapers/Tuesday, Sept. 1, 1998

West Side Tennis Club host to a special outing for disabled

By Leslie Beth Feffer
Staff Writer

Less than five miles from where the U.S. Open was getting under way yesterday, more than 100 avid fans were at the storied West Side Tennis Club instead for the eighth annual YAI/National Institute for People with Disabilities Grand Slam Tennis Outing.

Among those enjoying a day of lessons with club pros, lunch, a round-robin tournament and an exhibition featuring 1975 U.S. Open mixed doubles champions Rosie Casals and Dick Stockton were Suzanne and David Bartash of Larchmont.

"They do wonderful things for a population that's in desperate need of having

wonderful things done for them," David Bartash said. "And we'll do anything we can to help support them."

Although they are avid tennis fans, the Bartashes won't be attending the U.S. Open until tomorrow.

"I'd rather play than watch," Suzanne Bartash said, laughing. "Also, this is a fund-raiser and that is a money-maker."

"This is much more important," her husband said.

Craig Miller, president of White Plains-based Westminster USA, Ltd., is one of the event's sponsors and has been a YAI supporter for more than 10 years.

"I'm not much of an athlete, but I

support the organization," Miller said.

The New Rochelle resident first became involved with YAI after a group home was built near his home, and he learned more about the organization. He now works with YAI's Business Advisory Council to create employment opportunities for people with developmental and learning disabilities.

The tournament was rained out on its original date, July 31. Although Stockton and Casals spoke with the small group that showed up that day anyway, they returned to the West Side Tennis Club yesterday, working around their prior commitments involving the tournament at Flushing Meadow.

"This is the Open for me," Stockton

said. "It's much more important and it's much better tennis."

YAI provides community-based services to people with developmental and learning disabilities, serving more than 12,000 people daily throughout the New York metropolitan area, including about 2,000 in Westchester. Organizers targeted somewhere in the mid-five figures as their fund-raising goal for this event, which will directly benefit the opening of a pediatric health care practice to treat children with developmental and learning disabilities.

The organization's next fund-raiser will be the YAI Westchester Challenge Cup Golf Tournament, on Sept. 28 at the Old Oaks Country Club in Purchase. Call (212) 273-6290 for more information.