

SPORTS

Champions are made in just a few short years

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In 2005, the year the Table Tennis Program began at the India Community Center (ICC) in Milpitas, the sport was best known for its appearance in the movie *Forrest Gump*. But five years later, its image has vastly changed.

A long-time hugely popular sport in countries like India and China, table tennis has gained a loyal following in the United States in recent years due to increased celebrity and media attention. But back in 2005, few outside of immigrant communities in the Bay Area had played it, and certainly not competitively. As interest in an organized table tennis facility grew,

the ICC began offering a space for those interested to meet and train.

At that time the Table Tennis Program had just four or five tables

to play on, situated on worn carpet in the old ICC building. Interest in the sport grew, and as more people heard about the availability of coaches and tables at the ICC, so did the program's attendance.

Five years later, it boasts a sparkling facility with 15 full-time coaches and over 140 kids attending classes. The Center facilitates more than 200 private lessons each week. Through charitable donations and the dedication of its coaching and administrative staff, most of whom are immigrants who played at the top levels in their countries of origin, the Table Tennis Center has become internationally known and respected as one of

Continued on page 13



continued from page 10

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the premier training programs and facilities in the world.

The Indian National Team trains at the facility each year, and starting in 2009, the Hungarian Junior National team joined them. The Table Tennis Center is now home to the largest USATT-approved singles league, and has fostered the development of some of the sport's best-known stars like Ariel Hsing and Lily Zhang.

Despite its phenomenal success and top-notch reputation, the fact that the Table Tennis Center is a community nonprofit, operating on donations, often gets overlooked. The Junior Training Program is reliant on funds from the Center's annual fundraiser, and donations from individuals and groups help keep it and the other Center programs up and running for Bay Area youth

at all levels of play to participate in.

The ICC welcomes help of any kind in order to continue serving youth interested in the sport. To learn more about the Table Tennis Center's programs or to donate, please visit www.indiacc.org and click on the ICC Table Tennis link.

