



**LUCY GRIERSON**

is an 8th grader at Rocky River Middle School. She has moved seven times and has lived in six different states.

Lucy has fun competing in sports including tennis, basketball, volleyball and sailing. She also enjoys baking, shopping and hanging out with friends. She dreams of attending an Ivy League school and pursuing her goal of becoming a sports medicine doctor for young athletes.

I remember the day; it felt just like yesterday. It was my first national tennis tournament in Mobile, Alabama. It was a fairly normal fall day; you could feel the breeze and hear the crunching of leaves under your feet. I felt ecstatic, that I had made it this far with my tennis career. It had been my second day of the week-long tournament and I playing a match against a girl from Florida. She seemed sort of angered that I had won the match, but I was most definitely not ready for what was about to come out of her mouth. As I approached the net and put my hand out to shake hers, she claimed that I was lucky and was a really bad tennis player. After that, I rushed off to find my team, to tell them what happened.

As I started browsing the tennis club for my team, my emotions tossed and jumbled in my head like clothes in the washer. I couldn't hear anything—all I saw was the mouths of people around me moving. I felt like everyone's' eyes were glued on me. The aroma of popcorn filled my nostrils and I started feeling sick. My mind was cloudy just like the sky before a big thunderstorm. In all nine years of playing tennis, I never had anyone say one distasteful thing to me. And most certainly, I had never said one mean word to anyone on or off the court. Then, my real emotions kicked in. I started getting enraged, clenching my fists and gritting my teeth. But then, the most unusual wave of heart sickening feelings blanketed over me. So, I came to the conclusion that I wouldn't want anyone to go through what I felt; the feel of bitterness and being alone. So, I knew this was my opportunity to make a change.

In the end, I was just thankful the girl had said those hurtful things to me and not to someone else. This is because I know how to accept the mean things in life, and brush it off, unlike some teens that let it overtake them. So, I thought long and hard about it, and realized that I can't talk to every single player to tell them to be nice. Therefore, that's when I came up with the idea! I could use the ripple effect to help stop hate. I can use this tool of success, by passing on kindness. So, the next time I play someone, and whether I win or lose, I will say kind words and keep my composure. Then, my hope is the next time my opponent plays a match they will be kind whether they won or lost and passes the heart-warming words to their opponents. Eventually, I believe the kindness will spread and the hate will reprieve. "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." -Margret Mead