Besides heading the WBC female championship committee, Jill Diamond has started a program called World Boxing Cares (WBCares).

The host of boxing luminaries who have signed on as WBCares goodwill ambassadors include John Duddy, Emile Griffith, Iran Barkley, Juan LaPorte, David Vasquez, Maureen Shea, Ann Marie Saccuratto, Cory Spinks, Erik Morales, Genaro Hernandez, Bernard Hopkins, Wayne McCullough, Laila Ali, DeMarcus Corley, John Stracey, Alex Ramos, Gerry Cooney, Vitali Klitschko, Lennox Lewis, Kostya Tszyu, Floyd Mayweather Jr., Azumah Nelson, Richie Woodhall, Luisito Espinosa, Jeff Fenech, Thulane Malinga, Brian Adams, Derric Rossy, and Donald Camarena.

The ambassadors visit local hospitals and community centers, bringing a message of hope to those who are sick, poor or in need of a positive message or direction in their life.

The latest stop was at Mott Haven in New York City's South Bronx, where Griffith, Duddy, Barkley, LaPorte, Vasquez, Rossy, Saccuratto and Shea addressed over 100 youngsters who ranged in age from five 18. Also present was Joe Dwyer, who serves in a WBC executive capacity.

The children listened with rapt attention as the boxers spoke about obstacles they've overcome to bring their lofty dreams to fruition.

"It didn't matter whether or not they could identify each guest," said Diamond, who has worked tirelessly on this altruistic effort, which has already made stops in Los Angeles and Denver. "They just knew boxing and that these athletes were there to deliver to them a message of hope and empowerment.

"The recurrent theme emanating from each speaker was school, respect and go for it," continued Diamond, the winner of several Emmy awards for television music production.

Diamond thanked Alan Shatz, the director of volunteers at the New York Foundling Hospital for "the privilege of being able to do this." Throughout the session, Shatz proudly wore a Reyes cap as the kids swarmed around the boxers for autographed photos, mini-gloves and stories.

"We all have it in our hearts to do good in life," said Diamond. "Sometimes it is not clear what road we will take. That is why it is important for these children to see the boxers. This is about more than boxing. It's what, in addition to talent and work, makes great athletes. It's about character. Developing character is the most crucial component of success."

When Rossy, an undefeated heavyweight from Medford, Long Island, who just days earlier had won a barnburner over Shannon Miller at Madison Square Garden, was asked by a little boy about street fighting, he responded unequivocally, "We fight inside the ring. Out on the street, it

means nothing. It's about respect."

"I believe that each child left there yesterday with a great message," said Diamond. "It is wonderful to be part of something so great."

Speaking of positive messages…..When the plight of former lightweight contender Sergei Artemiev was reported in TSS last April, he received letters of support from fans around the world.

A native of the former Soviet Union, Artemiev was a sensational amateur who was brought to the United States by promoter Lou Falcigno in 1990. He amassed a record of 18-1-1 (12 KOS) when he was matched with Carl Griffith in March 1993 in Atlantic City for the vacant USBA lightweight title. The winner was promised a bout with WBC lightweight champion Miguel Angel Gonzalez.

The 24-year-old Artemiev spent 12 days in a coma after being stopped in the tenth round by Griffith. So severe were his injuries, on several occasions the Soviet media had reported that he had died.

Although Artemiev still has many physical and mental limitations, he is alive and well in Brooklyn, New York. His attitude toward life is nothing short of awe-inspiring. He refuses to be constrained by his limitations and works tirelessly to keep his mind as sharp as possible by studying a Russian/English dictionary to improve his memory and painstakingly keeping a daily journal and calendar.

He is grateful for all that he has, which to many people would not be much. More than anything else, he is grateful for the love of his 13-year-old son Peter, who is now a student at a Texas military academy. He affectionately calls him Peter the Great.

Peter was born shortly before Artemiev's fateful bout with Griffith. Artemiev is certain that he heard his son's voice and crying, and felt his presence during his time in the coma. If not for Peter the Great, he is sure that he would even be alive today.

"When I was in hospital (rehab) people tell me that only God, three doctors, and my son, Peter the Great, kept me alive," said the eternally optimistic and incessantly positive Artemiev. "Even though I was in coma, I know I hear his voice and his crying and feel his presence. He gave me the will to live. I love him more than anything."