

Schools and After-School Programs

TENNIS IN SCHOOLS

Teachers help shape the future of the kids you teach every day, and tennis is an excellent sport to help in that mission. Studies show that youth who play tennis are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and volunteer in the community. The USTA created the Net Generation suite of tools and resources with teachers in mind and with their help, we can inspire kids to get active—and stay active!

RESOURCES

[Tennis in Schools](#)

[The Tennis Impact](#)

SCHOOL TEAM TENNIS

School team tennis is an incredible opportunity for teenagers to compete in a great environment on a team with friends. Whether you are an experienced coach or organizing a team for the first time, the USTA can provide helpful resources and coaching tips to help you lead and develop a successful squad.

Challenges for High School tennis

1. Challenge: Recruiting girls to play high school tennis when they have never played before. With a variety of cultures and beliefs in many communities, communicating with families about the importance of sport and exercise for young women is critical. There is also a lack of self-esteem present when they have not been exposed to the sport until they get to high school, which makes it even tougher. High school is such a critical age where kids want to feel accepted and they don't want to feel embarrassed or ashamed. Being a part of a team offers so many physical and mental health benefits.

Solution: Working with the elementary, middle and high school PE teachers to get them free training and free equipment through Net Generation so they can expose the youth at a much younger age. Promote all the health benefits of tennis and how it socially-distances naturally. Look for opportunities for partnerships with companies like the American Heart Association or others that promote healthy lifestyles and can help spread the word on the health benefits of tennis.

2. Challenge: One of the biggest challenges is attracting tennis to a high economically disadvantaged group of kids with very little parent support for sport. Many low-income schools have trouble with kids having the money to buy court shoes and/or a racquet.

Solution: Get a local NJTL program started and find a public facility that would accommodate this as well as work with vendors to give discounts to low-economic schools for shoes and racquets. Grant programs not only for equipment, but uniforms, are something that is asked for frequently.

3. Challenge: Tennis can be a difficult sport to learn at the high school level if a beginner is only allowed to play with the yellow ball. Be open to using orange- and green-dot balls to get beginner high school tennis players started in the game. High school players do not want to feel embarrassed in front of their peers and allowing them to have some success right away gives them incentive to keep wanting to play.

Solution: Look for opportunities to promote the benefits of the low-pressure balls for high school players through social media. Grant programs could include some of the various balls for the coaches to train with, and more

marketing efforts on the benefits of using the ball that allows you to have the most success and FUN. Offer programming for high school players like JTT or out-of-season play with green-dot balls in addition to the traditional yellow ball. With the USTA and USPTA working together, we need buy-in from the pros to use the ball that the high school player will keep coming back for more.

Resources

[Boys Tennis Healthy Sports Index](#)

[Girls Tennis Healthy Sports Index](#)

[USTA Middle and High School Team Tennis](#)

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

After-school programs are a key part of developing future tennis players and fans and also serve as an important resource for youth. After-school programs keep youngsters safe, providing a positive alternative to the streets or hanging out at home alone without parental supervision. After-school programs also have academic benefits, engaging children by offering a range of creative, hands-on learning and enrichment activities.

Tennis is an ideal sport to introduce and play in after-school programs. Successful programs use tennis as a hook to introduce young people not only to tennis, but also to effective life skills, critical thinking habits, and the positive virtues of determination, hard work and sportsmanship. There are resources available for after-school programs that incorporate tennis through [USTA.com](https://www.usta.com), including a full community curriculum for teaching large groups.

After-school programs often involve many activities, and tennis can be one of the many program offerings. Some after-school programs will run for a set period of time as an activity that every child in the program participates in. Often, funding for programs like that will come from an outside source, or the after-school program will pay a fee to the provider. Other programs will offer it as an add-on option, which families pay extra to have their children attend.

All after-school programs should have an outlet for the children who are interested to move into more tennis-specific programming at a club, NJTL, CTA or park. This should be communicated with students and parents to the extent possible. Offer options that are affordable to the families in the program.

CASE STUDY: COLMESNEIL HIGH SCHOOL | Submitted by Sergio Ramos

Introduction

Sergio Ramos, Tennis Coach at Colmesneil High School in Colmesneil, Texas, notes, “I have been actively involved with promoting tennis in Southeast Texas for 60 years, first as a college tennis player, then, after college, as a high school tennis coach. I coached in Woodville High School (50 years) and now, I coach in Colmesneil High School.

“My goal has been to introduce as many people as possible to the sport of a lifetime, tennis. While in Woodville High School, we resurfaced two old asphalt courts, then we built four new concrete courts. Woodville built a tradition of winning consistently in district and regionals and then advancing to the state tournament for many years.

“After leaving Woodville, I came to Colmesneil High School. One of my goals was to restart the tennis program by promoting tennis among the students, the school community and administration. I made a presentation to the local school board about building a tennis facility. Since we did not have tennis courts, the tennis team practiced in one of the gyms. The team has been able to win our district tournament twice since then. A presentation was made to the school board nearly four years ago about building tennis courts.”

Goals

To restart the tennis program at Colmesneil High School, and to build courts at Colmesneil High School

- **Project Size:** Colmesneil High School has 28 students involved in varsity, junior varsity and freshman teams
- **Location:** Colmesneil High School, Colmesneil, Texas
- **Community Size:** The high school is a Texas Region 3-2A school
- **Lead Advocate Organization:** Colmesneil High School
- **Length of Project:** Project took nearly a year to complete
- **Budget:** \$300,000
- **Funding Source(s):** Colmesneil ISD paid for the whole project, although it was able to fund only two courts instead of the four requested

History

“After four years, this goal has become a reality. Colmesneil High School has two brand-new, beautiful tennis courts as well as active teams. We dedicated our courts with a ribbon cutting to go along with the USTA’s promotion of May as National Tennis Month. ”

Activities to coordinate with the court opening and with National Tennis Month included the following:

- Tennis team members spoke in the local elementary school about tennis sportsmanship and tennis etiquette.
- Several area tennis coaches were invited to participate in the event. Three of these coaches were members of the Texas Tennis Coaches Association Hall of Fame.
- Colmesneil also offered a student mixed doubles tournament after school where high school tennis players asked another student in the school to play doubles with them. The benefits of tennis as a lifetime sport were the main emphasis for all events.

Tips from the Pros

Promote tennis consistently among students, parents, school administrators and the whole community.

Lessons Learned

Patience and perseverance.



CASE STUDY: ECADEMY K8 TENNIS CLUB | Submitted by Lyndsey DiLorenzo

Introduction

eCADEMY K8 Online Magnet School was a brand-new Albuquerque public school created in 2020 in response to community demand. eCADEMY K8 continues to offer a completely online comprehensive education and to serve students from kindergarten to eighth grade.

When the eCADEMY K8 Tennis Club was created, there were no in-person clubs at eCADEMY K8, but there was a need for in-person community and engagement. With generous grants and a lot of heart from all those who helped this project come together, students had the opportunity to have their lives positively impacted by the game of tennis with fellow students and friends.

Goal

The goal of the eCADEMY K8 Tennis Club was to meet a need for in-person connection at an online school and to provide the opportunity for students to engage, grow and develop, and overall for us to be able to promote the game of tennis.

- **Project Size:** 25 students
- **Location:** Highpoint Sports & Wellness in Albuquerque, New Mexico
- **Community Size:** Fourth through eighth graders at eCADEMY K8 Online Magnet School, a Title 1 School located within the Albuquerque Public School District
- **Lead Advocates for Organization:** Lyndsey DiLorenzo (eCADEMY K8 School Counselor) and Wendy Thomas (Highpoint Sports & Wellness Instructor)
- **Length of Project:** 2021-2022 School Year was the first year. (The Tennis Club is set to continue each year.)
- **Budget:** Zero-sum

Funding Source(s)

- Grants from partnerships
- Tennis court time donated from Highpoint Sports & Wellness
- Donation of time, food and miscellaneous items from Lyndsey DiLorenzo and Wendy Thomas

Partnership(s)

Tennis Club organizers were grateful to the following:

- Highpoint Sports & Wellness: Donation of court time
- USTA-Southwest Section: Donation of tennis racquets, tennis balls and prizes
- New Mexico Youth Tennis Foundation: Donation of \$300 for T-shirts

History

According to Lyndsey DiLorenzo, “The eCADEMY K8 Tennis Club began as an idea in the Summer of 2021 with Wendy Thomas (a tennis instructor) and me (Lyndsey DiLorenzo), a collegiate tennis player and current professional school counselor, brainstorming and researching, then grant writing to put the vision into action. We advocated for the students and the sport for the benefit of all involved. The eCADEMY K8 Tennis Club started in early October and concluded at the end of April. There was great success, both emotionally and physically.

“The eCADEMY K8 Tennis Club started as a dream of adults and leadership but was accomplished with amazing students who were, and continue to be, filled with endless potential. The students would come week after week, improving their skills and building their confidence.

“I would reach out to students of the eCADEMY K8 Tennis Club via e-mail, school chat and phone calls to encourage participation and conversation. It was fun and character-building. I decorated with a professional banner, balloons (first day), banner flags and certificates (last day). I provided gifts, prizes and healthy snacks after each session. There was also a pizza party at the end of each semester to celebrate our successes. Gently used racquets and balls were given to family members to encourage play between sessions and beyond. Tennis is a lifelong sport with numerous benefits, and we want to foster a love for it!”

Funding

Lyndsey and Wendy donated their time and money to make the eCADEMY K8 Tennis Club a success, but it always takes a village. The USTA-Southwest Section generously provided tennis racquets and tennis balls. New Mexico Youth Tennis Foundation generously provided funds for a group T-shirt for students to keep which fostered unity and a greater sense of connection. The confidence and joy seen as the players sported their T-shirts was contagious. The eCADEMY K8 Tennis Club members did not have to pay any money to participate; they only needed to arrange their transportation to the tennis courts.

Other Support/Donations: Many people and organizations worked together to create something beautiful from scratch. The program enjoyed visits from the two other eCADEMY K8 school counselors to promote balanced wellness and to address questions and concerns on the spot.

Tips from the Pros

Follow your dreams and don't give up!

Lessons Learned

Lyndsey DiLorenzo notes, “Success is always possible, even at a completely online school. I was able to use my experience of playing collegiate tennis and being a professional school counselor to weave life lessons into the tennis curriculum to provide lifelong success on and off the court. Friendships were formed and tennis strokes were refined. It really was the best of both worlds!”

CASE STUDY: FREE HOME TENNIS CLUB | Submitted by Keith Furstenberg

Introduction

The Free Home Rocket Tennis Club began in 2018, coinciding with Coach Keith Furstenberg being hired by the Cherokee County School District. At the time, Free Home Elementary School had neither a tennis program nor access to tennis equipment. The Free Home community is primarily a rural farming area.

Goal

This program had several goals:

- Promote wellness and activity to elementary students through tennis
 - Promote the game of tennis to students in a community where it is not commonly played
 - Foster sportsmanship in school
 - Provide opportunities to underserved students
- **Project Size:** A total of 28 fourth and fifth grade students participated in the first year
 - **Location:** Free Home Elementary School, Canton, Georgia
 - **Community Size:** The school has 317 students
 - **Lead Advocate Organization:** Free Home Elementary School
 - **Length of Project:** Eight months
 - **Budget:** \$600
 - **Funding Source(s):** The new balls and pop-up nets were bought by a grant to improve participation
 - **Partnership(s):** The USTA and the school PTA

History

Within his first year at the school, Coach Furstenberg applied for a USTA grant for tennis equipment. He was then paired with a USTA member from Cherokee County. Together, they brainstormed ideas on how to make an elementary tennis club that would provide players with their first glimpse into the world of tennis.

Coach Furstenberg has always had a love for racquet sports. He knew that he was going to share his passion for the game with students who had never experienced it before. The first step was to obtain the equipment through a USTA grant. In the meantime, he scoured garage sales and estate sales to get equipment. He began incorporating the basic skills as stations during his physical education class and in the after-school program.

After receiving the USTA grant, and subsequently enough equipment to begin a club (and with the school principal's approval), the Free Home Tennis Club was formally created, offering before-school tennis. In its first year, 18 students from the third, fourth and fifth grade joined. The school gym hosted all play. In the beginning of the club, most of the students had never even seen a real tennis racquet in person, let alone held one.

Coach Furstenberg honed in on his tennis skills by attending special racquet sport sessions at the "Share the Wealth Conference" in 2019, 2020 and then again in 2022 after a year where many events were cancelled due to COVID-19. The program was selected in 2020 as a USTA Superhero Event. A representative came out and shot a short film of the tennis club, while participants enjoyed becoming "tennis superheroes," wearing superhero outfits while they had a blast playing.



The Rocket Tennis Club has enjoyed growth and renewed interest each year. In 2021 and 2022, the group grew to 26 students who met every week. All of the students in kindergarten through fifth grade are also getting opportunities to use the racquets and equipment during a two-week tennis unit.

Coach Furstenberg has been using skills from additional USTA webinars and conferences to enhance the experience for his students. Students can also use the equipment during the after-school program on the schools' blacktop area. Tennis has also been incorporated into the annual field day as a station.

Most recently, Coach Furstenberg has been encouraging and growing the game with minority students. His aim is to get more support from the USTA and the school PTA for the upcoming school year to purchase more equipment. Another goal is to have continued growth and support from the community. This would include getting financial support to replace old and broken equipment as needed.

Funding

Funding came from a USTA grant, and from a separate Grow the Game grant.

Other Support/Donations: The group has received support from the school PTA to purchase portable nets and new tennis balls.

Tips from the Pros

Coach Furstenberg says, "We were fortunate to receive some fantastic support from the local pros when we were first establishing our club. They provided ideas on how to run stations and small-sided games. We also obtained laminated skill cue cards to help during stations and instructional time."

Lessons Learned

Coach Furstenberg is thrilled with the success of the program, noting, "A project that is small and operated by one person can be a wonderful opportunity to share the love of tennis and to grow the game. My goal is to create a lifelong appreciation for tennis and other racquet sports. Many components are a piece of these sports lessons, including teamwork, social and emotional learning, as well as a chance to create memories with others. Some of these students would not have had a chance to learn about the game if it were not for the USTA and the grant it gave to our school several years ago."

CASE STUDY: THE HOMESCHOOL HELPERS TENNIS PROGRAM | Submitted by Rick Hassler

Introduction

Homeschool children in the Lakes Region, Nashua and Seacoast can learn tennis, thanks to a new program started by two residents and supported by funding from USTA New England and USTA New Hampshire, as well as additional help from Advantage Kids.

Jolie and Rick Hassler launched the program at Gilford Hills Tennis & Fitness Club in March, the first of six weekly lessons for more than 100 homeschoolers in the state at the Gilford club and also at Longfellow Tennis & Swim Club in Nashua and Great Bay Athletic Club in Newmarket.

This project began with Jolie Hassler teaching tennis to homeschoolers in the local gym as a physical education course. The students loved it. Jolie borrowed racquets, nets and balls from Advantage Kids and the word started spreading. Other parents started asking for similar programs, and wanted to know how they could help. Adam Hirshan of USTA New England heard about this and facilitated a grant to make the program a possibility.

Goal

To teach tennis to homeschool students, giving them a sport they can enjoy for the rest of their lives.

- **Project Size:** The goal was to have 250 new homeschoolers playing tennis by 12/31/22
- **Location:** Program used three tennis clubs located in New Hampshire
- **Community Size:** The New Hampshire homeschool community has been estimated at 5,000
- **Lead Advocate Organization:** The Homeschool Helpers and USTA New England
- **Length of Project:** Current project funding until year end, then continuation
- **Budget:** Currently \$20,000 with hope of expansion
- **Funding Source(s):** USTA New England and USTA New Hampshire
- **Partnership(s):** Advantage Kids, Gilford Hills Tennis Club, Great Bay Athletic Club, Longfellow New Hampshire Tennis & Swim Club

History

After the first two sessions and teaching over 100 new students in three clubs, Jolie had a considerable waiting list for additional sessions and was being asked by homeschoolers around the state to bring the program to their area.

Some quotes from Jolie and stories about students:

- I have one 10-year-old student who walked up to me and said, "This is the first sport I have ever played, thank you so much," and hugged me.
- Another student wants to become skilled enough to try out for the local tennis team.
- I have many students and parents who wrote wonderful letters and cards, thanking us for the program.
- I had three kids hug me when I came into our Homeschool Cooperative on Monday, because they enjoyed it so much.



- Another came to tennis class with a great smile and I said, “What’s the word of the day?” The answer: “I love tennis, thank you so much!”
- The parents’ support and appreciation is constant with thank you e-mails and texts.

Rick Hassler notes, “Jolie is grateful for this opportunity to grow this incredible sport and just is working on figuring out how to keep it going, and how to build this out in order to serve homeschoolers across the U.S.”

The result, say organizers, is nothing short of phenomenal. Many of the students had never played a sport and had limited access to any type of sports teaching. They now love tennis and their parents are also playing with them for a great experience.

Funding

Grants as follows:

- USTA New England: \$12,164
- USTA New Hampshire: \$3,500
- Rick and Jolie Hassler donated their time and teaching, as has one of the pros at Great Bay. So far, the program has taught six-week beginner sessions to 108 different students at a cost to organizers of only \$ 67.59 per student

Other Support/Donations: Support of homeschoolers, minimal registration fee of \$20 per student

Tips from the Pros

“Use a minimal registration fee (\$20 is good) to assist in sustainability and commitment from the student/parent,” notes Rick Hassler. “Most important is having the correct racquet, court and balls available, which we did, and this facilitated happiness instead of frustration. We also made sure they had the correct grip. Students had a fun warm-up, as well as an explanation of the court, including the names of all lines. From there, we progressed to forehand, backhand, volley and serve, as well as many fun games. After that came instructions on how to rally and play with family and friends and how to enjoy tennis. Most importantly, we made sure they had fun; the pros all made this happen.”

Lessons

Have a daily theme or word of the day, like “effort” or “teamwork” to assist with character building and working together. Always emphasize fun.

CASE STUDY: LETT TENNIS SKILLS CHALLENGE | Submitted by Suzy Harris

Goal

To create tennis P.E. programs in elementary and middle schools in order to increase the number of underserved youths playing tennis, and to increase the number of middle and high school tennis teams.

- **Project Size:** Seven schools, with a total of 1,300 students in P.E.; teams of 15 took part in the Skills Challenge
- **Location:** Various schools and Highland Park Tennis Center (all located in Alabama)
- **Community Size:** 1.1 million in the metro area
- **Lead Advocate Organization:** Birmingham Area Tennis Association/Learning Excellence Through Tennis (LETT)
- **Length of Project:** The program first ran between March and May 2022
- **Budget:** Between \$10,000 and \$15,000
- **Funding Source(s):** Birmingham City Schools, USTA Foundation, USTA Southern, USTA Alabama, Friends of Highlands, Birmingham Park and Rec, individual donors
- **Partnership(s):** Birmingham City Schools P.E. Department; University of Alabama-Birmingham Minority Health and Health Disparities Center

Introduction

“Our National Tennis Month program supported the development of P.E. tennis and the LETT Tennis Skills Challenge in the Birmingham City Schools, a 100% free and reduced lunch district with students who are primarily African American and Hispanic,” says Suzy Harris, LETT’s executive director. “The goal of this program is to introduce tennis to underserved third through eighth graders in the P.E. setting and to allow them to compete as teams against one another in the hopes that we can involve students in after-school, summer and weekend tennis programs. We hope to see the development of middle and high school tennis teams.

“The Skills Challenge itself allows P.E. coaches from area schools to select up to 15 students from their P.E. tennis classes to form a team to compete against those of other schools. P.E. tennis programs began in February and March and continued into April in anticipation of the Skills Challenge, which was first held on May 25, 2022.

“The teams competed against each other in five activities while P.E. teachers also had the option of competing against other P.E. teachers in the same skills. In addition to tennis skills, we introduced nutrition, life skills and reading components that will count toward their team standings.”

History

LETT laid the foundation for this program in 2018 and 2019 by hosting two professional development days for all 85 P.E. teachers in the system. The program introduced P.E. teachers to tennis (if they did not yet play it) and provided Net Generation training in the computer lab.

With the assistance of USTA Southern and Alabama staff members, LETT also provided instruction on the new P.E. tennis curriculum. For P.E. tennis, about 600 to 800 students were involved and up to 150 students competed in the Skills Challenge.

Harris notes, “We hope to continue the challenge in the future and are in talks with the district to extend this program in the fall and spring with the creation of an after-school junior team tennis league for fourth, fifth and sixth graders. The district is willing to invest funds in the program and we will be approaching the Police Athletic League to try to involve officers in the program as well.”

The numbers and results speak for themselves. For P.E. tennis, about 600 to 800 students were involved, and up to 150 students competed in the Skills Challenge. Harris says, “Our challenge in 2019 resulted in six students arriving

at their high school ready to help create a team. This led to a boys' team at Ramsey High School for the first time in years."

Each participant is also offered the opportunity to join LETT's free Saturday Tennis programs. One recent event has already resulted in three students and their siblings signing up for the programs.

Tips from the Pros

Plan for inclement weather; at one point, the forecast did not call for rain, but overnight, it rained.

Lessons Learned

"The weather did not cooperate but we were lucky in that the school's event room was available; however, it still had voting machines from the previous day's elections," Harris says. "One of our volunteers happened to be on the Election Board and she was able to reach the judge for permission to use the room. He asked her to stay in the room and we were able to use pop-up nets and foam and red balls for the activities. (No voting machines were harmed.) Next year, we will book the event room, just in case. We will also work with the district on working around testing and other key activities."

CASE STUDY: OKMULGEE PRIMARY TENNIS PROGRAM | Submitted by Dr. James Quinn

Introduction

Okmulgee is a small rural town about 40 miles south of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The town did have a rich history of tennis, but that was long ago and there were very few people who played anymore. The school tennis program was gone and all that was left of the robust program was the public tennis courts and two school courts that needed to be refurbished.

Okmulgee is a community that has a median family income of about \$34,000 and many of the students in the schools come from broken homes. There is a diverse student population that is made up from three large groups: Native American (First American), African American and Caucasian.

"I had a vision to help young people become interested in something other than videogames and drugs," says Dr. James Quinn. "Since I play tennis and I am a school counselor, I got permission to start an after-school program for the kids to play tennis."

Goal

To develop a tennis program for elementary students that will enrich the lives of the participants and their families.

- **Project Size:** 30 students
- **Location:** Okmulgee, Oklahoma
- **Community Size:** 12,500 residents



- **Lead Advocate Organization:** Okmulgee Public School
- **Length of Project:** 10 weeks
- **Budget:** Zero-sum
- **Funding Source(s):** Donations from Victory Tennis in Little Rock, Arkansas; Tulsa Area Tennis Association; Indian Springs Tennis Club; RH 91 Tennis Club Tulsa; the founders of the program, Dr. James Quinn and his wife, also purchased balls, a net for indoor use and racquets
- **Partnership(s):** Tulsa Area Tennis Association

History

“There is only a 10-week history as we are wrapping up the after-school program. It is very successful, and the local paper has run two stories about our program. We have 30 kids who have fallen in love with the sport and have learned the basic skills – and at least 30 more want to join.

“Not only are they physically active but they play together cooperatively and they have improved their listening skills. The kids and parents have expressed their excitement and they want more tennis-related activities for next year. We hope to expand our program into a summer camp and a new program for our middle school. The kids just love the program and have learned many skills (both on and off court) that will help them in all areas of development.”

Funding

“We started with zero money. My wife and I bought a net for the gym and some red-dot practice balls. I received donations of used junior racquets to get started. Tulsa Area Tennis Association provided junior racquets and coaches’ racquets to help our program grow. The school PTO is providing more balls and a net; we have not received those yet.”

Other Support/Donations

“We are getting more and more support from the community. So far, the Tulsa Area Tennis Association, the Okmulgee PTO and local T-shirt shop, Main Street Customs, have donated shirts for the kids.”

Tips from the Pros

Don’t be afraid to get expert help. “The director of Junior Tennis at Racquet and Health 91(RH-91) in Tulsa, Matias Marian, helped me by inviting me to watch and participate in their junior program. After a few sessions with Matias, I felt comfortable starting the sessions with our kids. He taught me drills for the kids and how to link with Net Generation to receive equipment for the school, as well as the curriculum to help out with tennis lessons.”

Lesson

Sometimes, it’s all about the learning experiences of the participants. “The kids have learned the importance of exercise and activity,” Quinn says proudly. “They also know that they have to keep practicing to develop a skill. They have learned to work together as a team. They are learning kindness and the importance of obeying rules in the game and in life. Many of the students have improved behavior in the classroom as a result of participation in the tennis program, and for many, grades have improved as well.”

National Junior Tennis & Learning (NJTL)

In 1969, the National Junior Tennis League was created as a way to gain and hold the attention of young people, with the hope of teaching them the importance of character, getting an education and becoming productive citizens.

Arthur Ashe, Charlie Pasarell & Sheridan Snyder, with the goal of developing the character of young people through tennis by: REACHING out to those who may not otherwise have the opportunity to learn and play tennis. INSTILLING the values of leadership and academic excellence. GIVING youngsters the opportunity to fully develop their tennis skills so they can derive a lifetime of enjoyment from the sport.

Today, the now-named National Junior Tennis and Learning network features over 275 nonprofit youth development organizations that offer free or low-cost tennis and education programming to over 130,000 under-resourced youth each year. NJTL is supported by the USTA Foundation, the national charitable organization of the USTA. The work done by its member chapters includes after-school tutoring that focuses on academic enrichment, a life-skills curriculum and, of course, tennis.

Resources

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about how your CTA can become an NJTL chapter for the first time or for answers to commonly asked questions.

CASE STUDY: MACH ACADEMY, INC. EDUCATION & OUTREACH | Submitted by: Michael Harden

Introduction

MACH Academy, Inc. learned there was funding available for individuals who were interested in coaching. Level 1 Coaching requires individuals to take two online Level 1 courses, two virtual workshops and one in-person workshop. The organization had a vision of finding young college graduates, women and high school seniors. As a result, MACH Academy started recruiting prospects, knowing it would need more coaches for more outreach.

Goals

This project had two goals: To increase the number of coaches for more outreach into the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Community, and to motivate and inspire more people to play tennis.

- **Project Size:** Six individuals were chosen for this training
- **Location:** Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) of Georgia
- **Community Size:** Under 200,000
- **Lead Advocate Organization:** MACH Academy, Inc.
- **Length of Project:** Four months
- **Budget:** \$6,000
- **Funding Source(s):** USTA Foundation, Richmond County Parks & Recreation and MACH Academy, Inc.
- **Partnership(s):** USTA, MACH Academy, Inc. and Richmond County Parks & Recreation



History

“MACH Academy’s goal is to bring change into the lives of participants, and in so doing, would like to reach as many participants as possible,” says Michael Harden of MACH Academy. “We want to take MACH Academy to the Boys and Girls Club, Richmond County Schools and the YMCA.”

But there was a surprise in store for MACH Academy when it came time to recruit, he adds:

“Willie Mae Pace is a 74-year-old. She is an official senior citizen. How can she be a success story? MACH Academy always recruits coaches to work for summer camp. This summer, 74-year-old Willie Mae Pace approached our president/CEO about wanting to work from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the hot sun, helping with the tennis program. We were wondering how this could possibly work out, but we said she could do it! We signed up to recruit coaches to participate in the USTA Level 1 Coaching Education. We started with six participants and ended with one eligible for the coaching stipend. Imagine our surprise when we learned it was Willie Mae Pace!

“Well, this lady is a phenom! She is a mother, grandmother, cancer survivor, tennis enthusiast, and on her way to becoming a PTR certified tennis coach at the age of 74. Willie Mae Pace was born November 16, 1947, in Louisville, Georgia. She started tennis at the age of 22, and it is her passion.

“Mrs. Pace is a cancer survivor of 12 years. With tennis being her passion, she continued to play once a week even during chemo. Her hobbies include gardening, cooking, reading and writing. Mrs. Pace serves as a Board Member for the CSRA tennis community and has completed training to become a USTA official. She is able to keep up on the court with children who are between five and 10 years old and is an inspiration to the adults who want to play.

“She has single-handedly completed the Level 1 Coaching education module and attended the virtual sessions. She has adapted to the high-level technology required to be in the virtual world. She has adapted to digital assignments. This phenom’s philosophy is simple: Believe in doing ALL the good for as many people as you can, family first. She sees MACH Academy as part of her family. Willie Mae Pace is an inspiration to the surrounding community by displaying her strong work ethic and her wisdom to the next generation of children.

“Willie Mae’s ability to complete the new USTA Level 1 Coaching Education Program, working with tennis players under the age of 10 on top of adapting to digital/virtual teaching methods is a success story and a testament to closing the generation gap. This really proves tennis is the sport of a lifetime.”

Funding

\$2,000

Other Support/Donations: Richmond County Parks & Recreation

Tips from the Pros

Make sure that your tennis instructor is educated, has specialized training and is on the path to certification.

Lesson

Recruiting for coaches can come in many forms and fashions. Never overlook older and even senior-age tennis players. It’s helped us achieve a lot of stability.



CASE STUDY: CREATING RURAL-BASED NJTL PROGRAMS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE'S MOUNT WASHINGTON VALLEY | Submitted by Robert Ronstadt

Introduction

Over 7,500 children under the age of 18 live in Carroll County. The vast majority of these have never been introduced to tennis. Under the leadership of Kent Hemingway, Advantage Kids decided to offer free beginner and pathway programs starting in 2019. Many of these children were living in families whose income was below the poverty level. According to the U.S. Census, half lived in families where the median per capita income is well below the national average of \$53,504 versus \$42,085 for Carroll County.

Goal

To create a self-sufficient, semi-autonomous NJTL program in a large (over 900 square miles) and sparsely populated region of northern New Hampshire, with regional tennis programs, regional funding, regional partners, operated by a regional area manager who is supported by a small stipend from Advantage Kids but volunteers the bulk of his time.

- **Project Size:** The project has been serving over 400 children from several different towns since 2019. In 2021, Mount Washington Valley ran 22 programs in multiple locations (described below). All told, the program delivered nearly 200 hours of tennis instruction and 100 hours of yoga training.
- **Location:** The Mount Washington Valley Region of New Hampshire has 18 towns in Carroll County. Programs are operated in the towns of Tamworth, Jackson, Eastern Slope, King Pine, Conway, North Conway, Cranmore and Freedom, plus Fryeburg, Maine.
- **Community Size:** There are 50,107 people living in Carroll County, according to the 2020 Census. Of these, approximately 15% or 7,500, are under the age of 18.
- **Lead Advocate Organization:** Advantage Kids
- **Length of Project:** Some programs are year-round due to partnership with after-school programs. However, most programs are approximately six months each year (May to October). Additional year-round activities are difficult because no public indoor courts exist in Carroll County. We are working to change that.

- **Budget:** The budget for 2021/22 was (rounded off) \$38,000. The average cost per program was approximately \$1,700 or \$95 per child across 22 programs.
- **Funding Source(s):** A principal funding source is the annual Dana Steele Mountain Tennis Tournament. Donations come to Advantage Kids from Carroll County donors, as well as from the USTA/New Hampshire, USTA/New England and USTA Foundation, plus school districts as part of their funding of after-school programs.
- **Partnership(s):** Brett School of Tamworth; Freedom Elementary School; Kennett High School; North Conway Recreation Center; Eastern Slope Inn; Fryeburg Recreation; Jackson Tennis Club, Purity Spring Resort.

History

Robert Ronstadt notes, “Our first programs were based on the USTA Team Challenge events and were held at the Jackson Tennis Club and the now-defunct Cranmore Indoor Tennis Center. These sessions quickly filled to capacity and gave us inspiration to begin the Advantage Kids Tennis PLUS! programs in 2020.

“We were able to secure the services of former Cranmore tennis professionals twins, Justin and Chris Chaffee. We utilized local outdoor courts throughout the valley and advertised through schools and the local newspaper. The publisher is a tennis advocate and friend, offering us free advertising in high visibility placements.

“We enjoyed such success, filling sessions and reaching a capacity that necessitated getting additional instructors. The Kennett High School varsity coach, retired teachers and our certified yogi became active members of our crew.”

The program can point to any number of indicators for success, including the development of introductory tennis skills, as well as yoga skills relating to balance, flexibility, motor control, mindfulness, listening skills and collaboration. Preparation for high school tennis is another outcome. Six Advantage Kids players are currently on the Kennett High School varsity teams.

Development of tennis coaches is yet another positive result. The program’s assistant coaches have gained certification through USTA youth coach program development. The program has added at least one additional staff member each season for the past year to address gains in enrollment, all great indicators for tennis.

And, says Ronstadt, “We have been able to help repair and maintain existing outdoor courts. Four of our middle school level players have assisted with clay court installation and maintenance, spending hours learning how to drive nails in canvas tapes.

“Finally, we are helping to create an indoor tennis facility. The North Conway Tennis Association (NCTA) has purchased land to build a new indoor tennis facility as the Cranmore courts were demolished to make way for an additional tourist hotel. Advantage Kids is a partner in this process and is collaborating with NCTA to make this a reality in 2024.”

Funding

Funding came from a variety of sources, including a local adult tennis tournament where participants donate to Advantage Kids. Funds are also earmarked for Mount Washington Valley. The Tamworth Outing Club is a local organization devoted to outdoor activities for all ages; members have agreed to sponsor the spring, summer and fall programs at the Brett School in Tamworth.

Additionally, the program received funding from the Tamworth Foundation during the COVID summer of 2021; this supported activities for children at a time when many camps, swimming and summer enrichment programs were cancelled.

Other Support/Donations: In-kind support of court/gym time has come from the North Conway Recreation Center, Jackson Tennis Club, Eastern Slope Inn, Purity Spring Resort and Project Succeed in the Conway School District; in addition, individuals voluntarily provide additional supervision of players.

Tips from the Pros

Ronstadt says, “The best way to fund programs is through local (i.e., regional) events that incorporate adults playing tennis. Target those adults who “bleed” tennis and are willing to give back to the game they love.

“The most successful approach to growing awareness is a round robin tennis event where there are no entry fees. Instead, a small portion of the day during the awards ceremony is dedicated to educating participants about Advantage Kids. The donations that result from this approach are outstanding, with some individuals donating hundreds of dollars to see tennis reborn in Mount Washington Valley.”

Lessons Learned

Advantage Kids Leadership has grown to understand the best instructional models are associated with small groups, coupled with offering a variety of activities, and making sure the timing for each session is optimal. Many parents and their children comment very favorably on the tie between tennis and yoga.