

Yeadon Tennis Program Nurtures Youth

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A Yeadon summer tennis program came to a celebratory end this past weekend at the United States Tennis Association (USTA) Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Queens, New York.

For nine weeks boys and girls, ages 4 to 17, participated in group tennis lessons that culminated with a trip to the festive Arthur Ashe Kids' Day. The kids were from the Yeadon Junior Tennis Program's Summer Sessions.

"I'm excited to see the performers, especially Mindless Behavior," said Sophia Coleman.



Tennis player Sophia Coleman in form as Coach Jarrod Grant gives instruction. –SUBMITTED PHOTO

A 5th grader at Evans Elementary School in Yeadon, Sophia is one of the many youngsters that participated in this summer's tennis program sponsored by Friends 4 Tennis in Yeadon and the borough's recreation department.

Many that participated picked up a tennis racket for the first time in their lives.

Three 3-week sessions were offered throughout the summer, utilizing the USTA's QuickStart program and some of the equipment supplied by Tennis Service Representative, Kitty Perrin. Professional Tennis Registry member coaches, including Haverford College Women's Tennis Team head and assistant coaches, Ann Koger and Louis Bolling, along with Liberia native Jeffrey Harmon, provided instruction.

As CEO of the Community Integration Program (CIPRO), Harmon was a champion for revitalizing tennis in the community.

In addition to group lessons, Yeadon resident and professional tennis instructor, Jarrod Grant, spent a day with the students conducting video analysis of their footwork and strokes.

"The coaches and the level of expertise and passion they bring to the program are outstanding," said Bernadette Anderson, mother of Sophia and Nicolas Coleman.

The tennis program was held at the old Yeadon Swim Club and at Kerr Field on the property of the William Penn School District.

“What I like most about the program is seeing my children doing something they truly enjoy and want to master,” Anderson said. “I feel that there are so many benefits tennis will offer them from simply an outlet to being fit to possible scholarship opportunities.”

Roy Hunter, Director of Recreation for Yeadon Borough and a former physical education teacher, said that he “was drawn to tennis because tennis is a lifetime sport.”

This is the third year for the program Hunter has managed on behalf of the borough.

Yeadon Mayor Dolores Jones-Butler said she “only became interested in the sport in recent years as a spectator.”

In 2010, Jones-Butler attended her first Arthur Ashe Kids’ Day, which since 1993 has been the unofficial beginning of the US Open tournament.

During the summer following the legendary tennis player, humanitarian and educator’s death, resulting from contracting HIV during a blood transfusion, Arthur Ashe Kids’ Day has become a massive tennis party honoring his legacy.

“Arthur Ashe’s efforts to help young people through tennis are very present here at the Arthur Ashe Kids’ Day,” said El Ali, father of Yeadon Junior Tennis Program participant, Sierra Reid.

The carnival-like atmosphere included face painting, stilt walkers, juggling, tennis obstacle courses and challenges throughout the 46 plus acre public tennis facility.

Aspiring musical acts performed on stages outside of the Louis Armstrong stadium as thousands enjoyed bumping into touring pros while scampering for autographs and photos.

Hosted by MTV VJ Quddus, this year’s Kids’ Day climaxed with performances by UK boy band The Wanted, pop-sensation Carly Rae Jepsen and the frenzy-igniting group Mindless Behavior.

The crowd of more than 23,000 in the Arthur Ashe Stadium was not disappointed.

Neither was Sophia.

“This was an awesome experience,” she said.