

# **1: HOW TO START AN NJTL PROGRAM\***

Starting a National Junior Tennis League (NJTL) program is much easier than most people think. The 8 key steps to starting a NJTL program are:

## **1. Identify and Recruit Key People**

It is essential that the development of an NJTL program is led by someone that is willing to commit the time, energy, and effort it requires to found and grow a community based nonprofit organization. In addition to this leader, you need an enthusiastic group of individuals that includes recreational professionals (willing to unselfishly share their expertise); local community contacts; and, access to tennis facilities. You should identify a Board of Directors comprised of individuals committed to the goals of the NJTL program. Make sure to include on the NJTL start-up team: tennis players of all ages; parents of junior players; and, seniors (who may have more volunteer time to devote to your organization.) Please note that school professionals and local park and recreational department staff can help the NJTL program get started by providing access to kids in schools and public tennis facilities.

## **2. Define your Mission Statement**

After your initial NJTL start-up meetings, one of your tasks should be to define the unique purpose of your program through a Mission Statement. The Mission Statement should explain WHAT you want to achieve in the long run; WHOM the target group of beneficiaries of your programs will be; and, HOW you will serve your target community. The Mission Statement serves as the guiding principle for all of your activities and describes the essence of the NJTL program and why it exists.

## **3. Define your Vision Statement**

The Vision Statement gives focus and direction; sets the energy for effective action in motion; and points toward ambitious and lofty heights. A well-prepared Vision Statement should be realistic and credible, well articulated and easily understood, appropriate, and responsive to change. A Vision Statement should challenge and inspire your group to achieve its mission.

## **4. Develop your List of Supporters and Partnerships**

One of your goals as an NJTL program is to build relationships or partnerships with other community organizations. Invite people of all ages and backgrounds in your community to attend an informal gathering to discuss your interest in starting an NJTL program. Share your Mission and Vision for your program and be willing to add, modify and/or change them according to the strengths and level of commitment from your program partners.

\*NJTL Best Practices Handbook 2008

**5. Identify the Local Partner Organizations**

You should make every effort to identify organizations to partner with that can help you deliver effective tennis programming in your community. Include the schools, parks and recreational departments, YMCA/YWCA, local tennis teaching professionals and enthusiasts, media contacts, service organizations, such as Rotary, Junior League, Chamber of Commerce, club owners, college and high school to mid school coaches.

**6. Identify Local, Regional and National Resources for Your Program**

Contact your local USTA Community Tennis Association (CTA) leadership and obtain a list of its board, and Chair of the junior committee, and NJTL committee members. Ask for the current local NJTL program directors contact information and set up a meeting with your task group. Contact your USTA Sectional Community Director for NJTL and obtain a listing of all the sectional NJTL programs. Contact the USTA National NJTL Office to register your NJTL program and to receive additional support and resources in program development.

**7. Develop and Adopt a Strategic Plan**

Work with your board to develop a strategic plan that includes your budget, goals, and an action-oriented timeline that increase the probability of success for your program. The plan should guide the day to day management of your program's vision. The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T) model can provide your leadership with an outline in defining the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that exist within your program. By asking the following questions, S – What are the program's internal strengths; W – What are the programs internal weaknesses; O – what external opportunities might move the program forward; and lastly, T – what external threats might hold the program back.

**8. Recruitment and Training**

Offer training for your diverse group of leaders and volunteers. Seek out people with different skills, motives, opinions and contacts. Provide training and education for their role and reward those who do their job well.