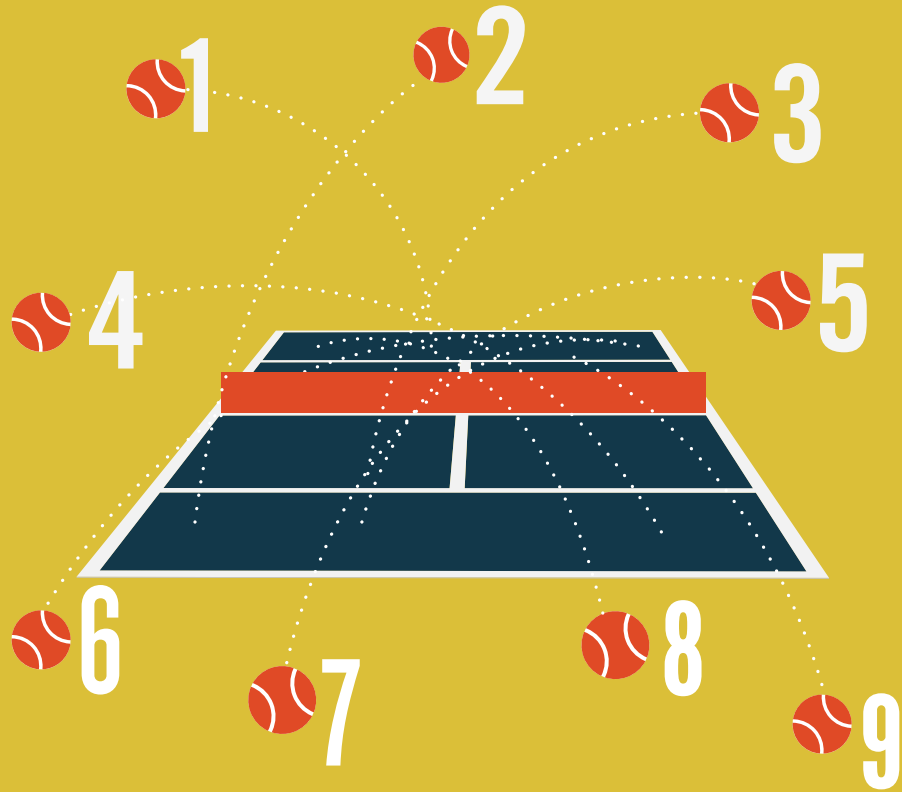


ADAPTIVE ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

EMBRACE THE FUTURE OF THE GAME

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WE BELIEVE IN AN OPEN GAME

At the USTA, we celebrate the open format- the idea that anyone from anywhere should be able to play and compete equally and fairly in a sport that is inclusive and welcoming to all. That's the principle behind our signature tournament, the US Open. It's also the driving force behind our Diversity & Inclusion strategy, which is designed to promote and grow our sport to the next generation of fans, players, and volunteers, and to make sure that the face of tennis reflects the face of our country. To do that, we are removing barriers and creating opportunities wherever we can, so that tennis becomes a true reflection of all of America

At the USTA, we want the game of tennis and the tennis courts across this country to reflect the unique diversity that makes America great. Not only are we striving for diversity in ethnicity, but also in age, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and all other reflections that contribute to the richness of our local communities and this nation.



Our mission is to position the USTA and the sport of tennis as the global model for diversity and inclusion in sports. The first step in that mission starts right here with you!

This guide is designed to help you connect with a key segment vital to the growth of tennis: the Adaptive community. You'll learn about the Adaptive community demographics, history with the sport, steps for engagement and success stories from others. With your help, we can make sure the game of tennis remains relevant, beloved and, most importantly, open to generations of players to come. This is only the beginning, a way to get the conversation started. Our hope is that with this information and insight in hand, you'll be able to begin to engage with the Adaptive community in a productive and meaningful way.

THE OPPORTUNITY

THE PLAYERS: THE ADAPTIVE COMMUNITY

The USTA recognizes four main categories of populations, conditions, and disabilities:

- Developmental conditions or disabilities
- Physical conditions or disabilities
- Emotional or psychiatric conditions or disabilities
- Environmental situations or conditions

While each of these subsets of the adaptive community may share characteristics, it is also important to understand that each of these communities will have specific needs to be addressed and different teaching techniques that will produce better outcomes.

It is important to note that each of these groups want to have fun, be engaged, and be treated with respect. Reaching out to this community represents a big opportunity for the growth of tennis.

TALKING POINTS: WHY THE ADAPTIVE COMMUNITY?

Tennis is a lifetime sport. It can be played by players of all different skill levels, offer valuable life lessons such as teamwork, commitment, sportsmanship, and the development of a good work ethic, among others. The USTA is committed to sharing our sport with all by providing everyone the opportunity to experience what our game has to offer.

INTO THE NET

BARRIERS TO THE ADAPTIVE COMMUNITY

- Lack of education on how to teach and engage the Adaptive Community
- Often, higher profile sports win out over tennis as a game of choice for people to play
- Access to quality courts, equipment, and consistent instruction in many neighborhoods is still a challenge
- Perception that tennis is too hard, too costly, or not accessible



**These are some general guidelines.
Of course, every person is different,
but these guidelines should give you
some examples of how you can coach
and teach different populations.**

ADAPTIVE COMMUNITY OUTREACH

DEVELOPMENTAL CONDITIONS OR DISABILITIES

(e.g., learning disabilities, epilepsy, autism, cerebral palsy, Downs Syndrome, mental retardation)

- It is important to demo activities, keep verbal instruction to minimum
- Establish a routine
- Utilize constant repetition, shadow drills
- Keep lines short and feed students multiple balls to help them gain success
- Praise students often

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Of course, every person is different,
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and teach different populations.**

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS OR DISABILITIES

(Birth defects, aging, diabetes, multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, muscular dystrophy, stroke, arthritis, hearing and visual impairments, loss of a limb)

- Limit aerobic exercise, but ensure to stretch
- Use lightweight racquets and balls
- Soft feeds, smaller court
- Give time to rest
- Speak slowly and demo all activities
- Keep instructor to student ratio small
- Mentor parents or guardians while having them involved

**These are some general guidelines.
Of course, every person is different,
but these guidelines should give you
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and teach different populations.**

EMOTIONAL OR PSYCHIATRIC CONDITIONS OR DISABILITIES

(Including those with behavioral problems or consumers of mental health services)

- Use words and praise
- Maintain control and structure
- Be flexible about participation, some may need breaks

**These are some general guidelines.
Of course, every person is different,
but these guidelines should give you
some examples of how you can coach
and teach different populations.**

ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATIONS OR CONDITIONS

(At-risk individuals, substance abusers, mentally and physically abused, homeless, HIV-positive individuals, persons from disadvantaged or underserved communities or cultures, persons within the juvenile justice system.)

- Reward students with praise and leadership roles
- Teach tennis scoring, basic rules, etc.
- Keep the class motivated and moving and engaged by switching drills
- Provide competition



COACHING

SUCCESS STORIES

You can learn a lot from watching what others have done. The following stories highlight some of the great work being done by other local community tennis associations to get you excited about the power you have to help others find themselves in the game.

TEACHING THE TEACHERS

“I can’t thank you enough and the organization to which you belong for changing my life. For once in a very long time I feel that I am part of a bigger family, and it’s exactly what I needed in my life. The power of this game has hit home for me, and that’s exactly how I feel when on the courts... at home.”

– Chris Bustamante, Army Wounded Warrior

WHO:

Wounded Warrior Tennis Program, San Diego, CA sdwoundedwarriortennis.org

CHALLENGE:

- Understanding the nature of combat-related injuries developing appropriate adaptive tennis activities.
- Training instructors and volunteers
- Identifying and gaining access to wounded, ill, and injured service members and veterans and maintaining communications with them
- Building, training, and managing a volunteer corps (currently 100 people).
- Identifying and pursuing sources of financial and in-kind support
- Administrative Tasks: Donor Database Management, Financial, Web Design, Social Media, Public Relations
- Interacting and developing relationships with other organizations and people.

APPROACH:

- Assemble a Core Team
- Researched and implemented many of the recommendations in the book, “First Things First” by Tom Iselin (HIGHLY recommended).
- Partnered with Certified Therapeutic Recreations Specialists at local military and VA medical centers
- Training Staff and recruiting volunteers through League Play, Tennis Clubs, etc.
- Secure funding through grants and private donations

- Increase Program Awareness in the community: press releases, informational talks, etc.
- Partner with other adaptive tennis providers to share best practices and lessons learned.

RESULTS:

We have served over 800 wounded, ill, and injured service members, veterans, caregivers, and family members since 2009.

KEY LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED:

- Start with people who are authentically passionate about your mission. Empower them with the knowledge, resources, and direction for them to be able to take charge of specific aspects of the program and run with it.
- Start small and build a strong foundation first.
- Create lines/methods of communication that are clear, simple, efficient and effective.
- Ensure you understand the population you are serving and the best ways to interact with and help them.
- Develop partnerships with organizations and people who can provide all forms of support - mentorship, advice, referrals, goods, services, etc.
- Promote the program to whomever will listen.
- Recognize all committee members, donors, and volunteers for their contributions. Always write thank you notes. No gesture is too small to be recognized.
- Never give up. Setbacks are a certainty. Embrace them and be creative in problem solving. Optimism is a key enabler.

TEACHING THE TEACHERS

*“We believe that we have ‘just scratched the surface.’
There is so much more to do.”*

– Janet from HERO

WHO:

HERO, Inc. (Help Expand Recreation Opportunities), Purchase, NY

CHALLENGE:

- Resistance from able-bodied groups, facilities, etc., lack of necessary funding, finding recreation space-gyms, other indoor areas.etc., producing programs at the highest possible level on a consistent basis

APPROACH:

- Find allies in your “section”, schools, parks and recreation departments, agencies and organizations that serve disabled populations, rehabs and hospitals. Develop a mailing list of donors and potential instructors.
- Securing 501-C3 Non profit status, a diverse Board of Directors- including community leaders, legal minds, parents of children with disabilities or an adult (s) with disabilities, former special education teachers, people who have a passion. Be persistent, but also be patient- nothing ever happens as fast as it should cultivate your contacts- you will need as many people as possible to help
- find a key staff member in the section/district USTA office who can help keep a sense of humor in tact-you’re really going to need it! Hire instructors who understand your goals. In HERO’s case: that the tennis is merely a vehicle- to provide your consumers with “fun, fitness and positive social experiences”.

RESULTS:

HERO was incorporated in 1992. We started with 50 consumers of mental health services, from five local hospitals. They loved the program! By 2016 HERO had served approximately 17,000 adults and children, living with developmental disabilities , autism, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, traumatic brain injury, emotional illnesses, visual limitations and those termed “at-risk.”

KEY LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED:

Create and form partnerships. Adaptive Tennis is relatively new and we are all learning new skills at each clinic. If the lines of communication remain open, we can all grow and better serve our communities.

TEACHING THE TEACHERS

WHO:

Buddy Up Tennis

CHALLENGE:

One of our biggest challenges as we expand across the nation is to maintain the integrity of our program and brand at each location.

APPROACH:

In order to provide consistency, we establish expectations and provide the tools and resources to implement our program. For each new location, we have a team of Coaches that travels to the new location to hold a training for the local volunteers and coaching staff. Our training team holds the first clinic with the new coaches and then we debrief immediately after the clinic. We also provide a detailed curriculum of our program which provides direction and guidance for both the local tennis and administrative leader. In addition, we provide a quick tips court reference tool for the coaches to utilize. After our launch, our program director follows up the local coach to ensure that they are ready to hold the next clinic and then again, after that clinic. Communication is critical! To this point, our program director/ training team sends a bi-weekly “tip of the week” to each

of our locations so that we are all implementing the same message. We have even started to send a video tip as we know that visual is a great re-enforcer!

RESULTS:

Communication is vital for consistency and creating a team atmosphere. We believe that by sharing information/updates/tips on a continual basis and by keeping the lines of communication open, our Coaches are excited to be a part of our program and empowered to deliver our program mission while maintaining our brand and integrity.

KEY LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED:



TEACHING THE TEACHERS

“The volunteer program director, Joyce Gavino, is always so positive when working with the tennis players. She pushes them to succeed in a way that is so fun and loving. It is a joy to watch her in action teaching and encouraging the players wherever they are in their accomplishments. This program understands the power of relationships in learning and growing.”

– Maureen Hunt, parent of a participant

WHO:

Powderhorn Park Special Olympics Tennis, Minneapolis, MN

CHALLENGE:

We partner with the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board and the Powderhorn Park Recreation Center to run our program. This helps us reach families through their channels, but without a marketing budget or paid staff, we struggle to market our program to a broader audience. Most of our new team members come through word of mouth and referrals. Due to a lack of access to indoor tennis courts on a regular basis, our program is also very seasonal. Some practices get rained out, and it can be hard to prepare our athletes for the Special Olympics competitions in a short time frame.

APPROACH:

At the core of our program is being flexible and inclusive. We meet the athlete where they are and help them be successful and feel a part of our team. We also make an intentional effort to be inclusive and all athletes are welcome to participate regardless of background, skill level, or ability to pay. As part of

our program, family members are also invited to participate and be active on-court with our team. The use of red, orange, and green balls as well as shorter courts allows us to accommodate all ability levels and provide a fun experience for everyone.

Our program runs from late April-July with practices once per week. A lead coach is available for every practice with on-court volunteers available to assist. Ideally, we always have a coach to athlete ratio of at least one coach per two athletes. The season concludes with a fun season-ending party at a local pizza place.

RESULTS:

We have a small program with nine athletes and five on-court volunteers. It is rewarding to see how their skills progress even from the beginning of the season to the end. Athletes compete in both the Area and State Special Olympics competitions, and we have strong retention from year to year.



TEACHING THE TEACHERS

WHO:

Laredo Tennis Association, Laredo, TX

APPROACH:

- Partnership with Stroke Survivors of Laredo
- Present class every other week for 1.5 hours
- Use of two racquetball courts, 10 & Under tennis equipment (foam, red balls, nets, start with Youth Tennis racquets until those that are more mobile are ready of adult size racquets.
- Divide the group by their mobility ability
- Financial support by donations from the community

RESULTS:

Stroke Survivors who previously had not ever played tennis, but perhaps participated in other sports, found themselves in a physically-active sport in which they could participate, exercise and be competitive with their club members.

Those individuals who did not have a great deal of mobility found via “chair exercise” of hand/eye activities were exercising, socializing, competitive and proud of the advancement in their strength and mobility. Family members often joined to support, learn and share the experience.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED:

Through muscle memory and an opportunity of acceptance the stroke survivors found their pride, dignity and excitement in participating once again in a sport they have learned to do well in and achieve levels of success they never believed they could achieve.

PUTTING YOUR PLAN IN PLACE

Here are five simple steps to follow as you kick off your plan.

Step 1: Find an idea you are passionate about

Now that you are inspired and motivated to reach out to the Adaptive community, find an idea that you and your CTA can get excited about and commit to.

For example, you may know of a local park that is underutilized and can host your event.

Step 2: Find a local partner

If you are not familiar enough with the Adaptive community, team up with a partner to reach out to this community.

Start by talking to your USTA contacts. Tell them your plan. Have them connect you to other USTA people or resources.

Next, reach out the existing Adaptive Organizations or Adaptive Tennis Programs in your section. Find out what programs worked and what solutions they found to any barriers. Finally, partner up with an organization within the community where you want to work.

The “Partner Up” diagram on page 16 walks you through this process and gives you ideas for helping to identify partners in your community.

Step 3: Formalize your plan and develop activation elements for your launch

Once you have your plan and your partner, it's time to formalize everything.

- Create a budget. Don't forget your 'in kind' contributions.
- Define your milestones.
- Determine ways to track your success
- Design and distribute your activation elements

For example, talk with your partner about the best channels to use to distribute your flyers. They may help you distribute them directly or may recommend key events, areas, organizations, community centers, cafes, or businesses.

Step 4: Execute and have fun!

You've prepared, you've publicized, now make it happen! Trial and error is a good teacher. As long as you have people playing tennis and having fun, that is all that matters. Be inclusive, and remember the goal is to engage the community so they know they are important and that we want to share our sport with them.

Step 5: Track, monitor, course-correct and share

As you build your program, keep track of your successes, understand what didn't work, and what you've learned along the way. Sharing all your learnings with other CTA's is important. The more we learn about what works, the better we can all become at spreading the love of tennis.

GETTING STARTED

Creating a bridge into the Adaptive community might not happen overnight. But if you stick with it, success can and will happen. Here are a few points to keep in mind as you put your plans into place.

Tennis is your “passport” into any new community

While it is always important to know as much as you can about the Adaptive Community, you don't need to be an expert; you already are an expert in tennis and have a passion for it. That should be your entry point into any new community.

You already know enough to get started

The materials and stories shared here are enough to help you make your first call or set up your first meeting.

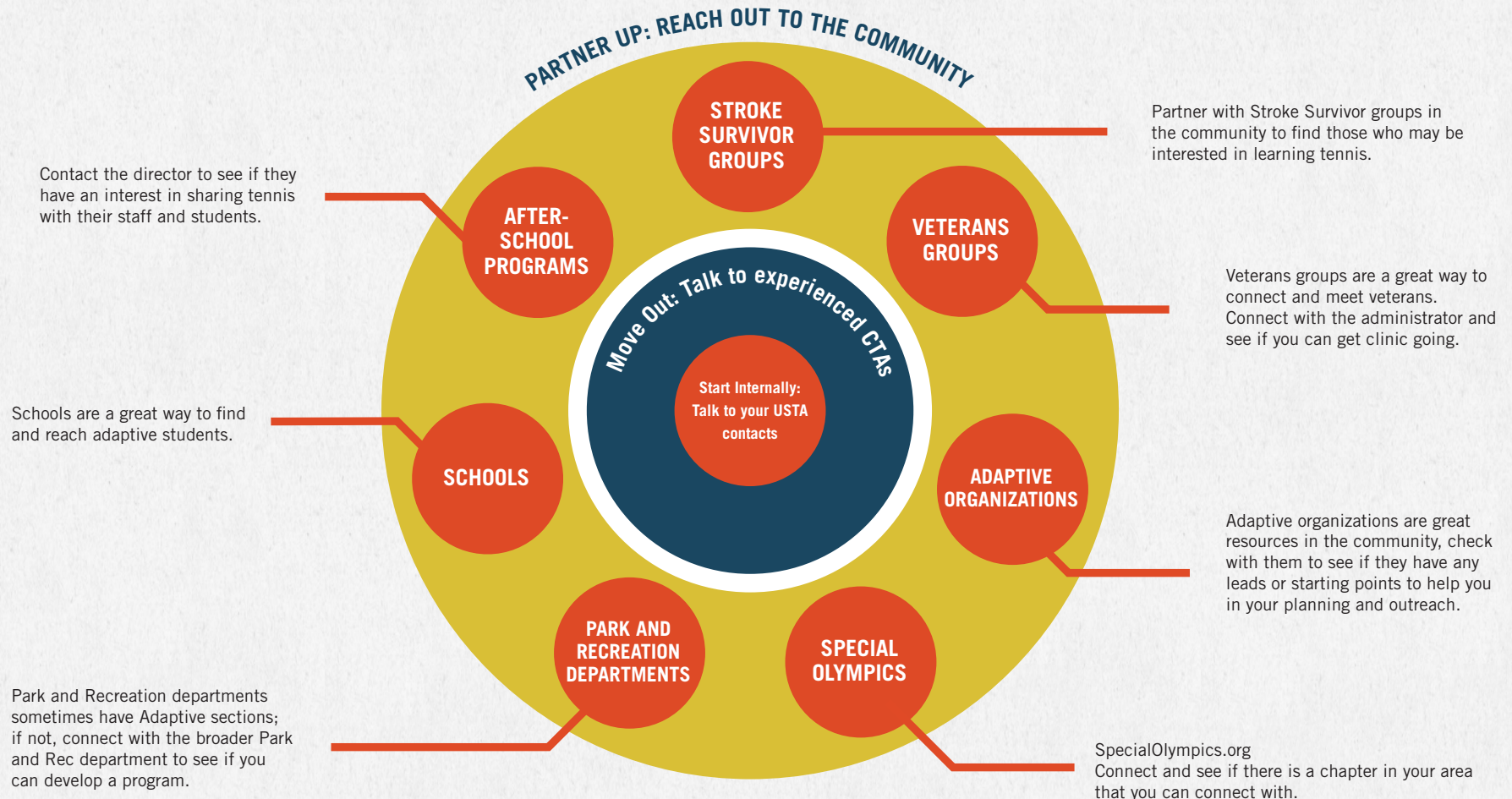
One call will snowball

The very first call, visit, or meeting with any organization may be your biggest hurdle. After that, your contacts and opportunities will snowball. What you are doing will spread through the community and before you know it you will have made a huge impact in a new community. But the first thing is to get started!



PARTNER UP

Having a partner in the community in order to get started is an important first step. Start internally and work your way out and you'll be well on your way to becoming an important part of the community yourself.



CONNECTING: ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

Looking for more ways to connect with the Adaptive community? There are probably many organizations and groups you can reach out to right in your own community. The following are just a few worth considering.

COMMUNITY CONTACTS


- Local Media/Publications
- Schools (P.E. and After-school Programs)
- Civic Organizations (i.e., YMCA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Boys & Girls Clubs)
- Government (City Council)
- Community Events/Festivals
- Religious Venues
- Iconic Local Cafés or Restaurants
- Local Tennis Coaching Professionals
- Private Club Owners and Operators

USTA CONTACTS

- Section Executive Directors
- District Executive Directors
- Section Diversity and Inclusion Representative
- Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittees
- CTA Donors
- CTA Staff and Volunteers

Sources
USTA Manual for Teaching Adaptive Tennis, 2006

The future of tennis is in your hands.



ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)
American Association of Mental Retardation
Association for Retarded Citizens
Brain Injury Association
Easter Seals
Special Olympics of North America
National Alliance for the Mentally III

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

http://assets.usta.com/assets/576/15/Manual_for_Teaching_Adaptive_Tennis.pdf
2002 USA Tennis Special Populations (Video)
Tennis- Special Olympics Sports Skill Program Available through the Special Olympics
USTA Wheelchair Engagement Guide