

NJTL Connections

2026 Summer Newsletter

NJTL Leadership Camp in Tennessee

The 2026 Lenny Simpson NJTL Leadership Camp brought together 28 aspiring young leaders from five states within the USTA Southern Section - AL, GA, LA, MS, and TN - for an unforgettable four-day experience focused on education, tennis, leadership, and purpose. Funded by the Southern Tennis Foundation, the camp fostered character development and leadership skills among youth from under-resourced communities, using tennis as a vehicle for personal growth. This is USTA Southern's ninth camp since 2016 and first in Memphis.

The camp kicked off with a warm welcome, check-in, and swag bag at the Holiday Inn & Suites Memphis East. Throughout the weekend, campers explored Memphis's most iconic attractions: the Stax Museum of American Soul Music, Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid, and the National Civil Rights Museum. On court, participants sharpened their tennis skills through drills, match play, and competitions at Eldon Roark Tennis Center and Leftwich Tennis Center.

The camp experience extended well beyond tennis. Campers participated in team-building activities, a Juneteenth Heritage Quiz Bowl, and a USTA Coaching Workshop, creating a meaningful blend of celebration, learning, reflection, and healthy competition. Team Blue captured the overall team award with team members receiving a \$50 gift card in recognition of their achievement.

Madison Wellons, of Atlanta, earned the Female Sportsmanship Award; Kaleb Phillips of Southaven, MS, and Damon Williams, of Memphis, were named co-recipients of the Male Sportsmanship Award.

Special thanks to Trip Wills and John Borden of Tennis Memphis; Danielle Lucas of Sideline Connections, Coach Arveal Turner of Epiphany Court, Andrew Feldman of USTA Southern, and Kim Wilson of USTA Tennessee for their outstanding support and dedication in helping make the 2026 Lenny Simpson NJTL Leadership Camp a tremendous success.



2026 Summer Newsletter



Camp Participants at the Leftwich Tennis Center



Camp Participants at the Stax Museum



Participating NJTL Chapters



Above the Net (GA)



Ace 2 Deuce CTA (MS)



A's & Aces (LA)



AYSI (GA)



Family Biz Builder (MS)



Friends of Battlefield Park (MS)



Golden Triangle Tennis (MS)



Greenville CTA/NJTL (MS)



James Lewis E&T FDN (AL)



Margaret Allen Middle School (TN)



South Atlanta NJTL (GA)



South Clayton CTA (GA)



Tennis Memphis (TN)



2026 NJTL High School & College* Grads!



Dillan LaFrance
A's and Aces



Kamren Fitzgerald
Above the Net



Ephrain Taylor
Ace 2 Deuce CTA



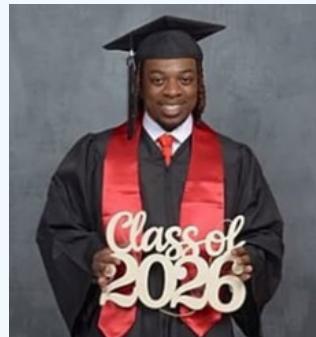
Justin Walker
Ace 2 Deuce CTA



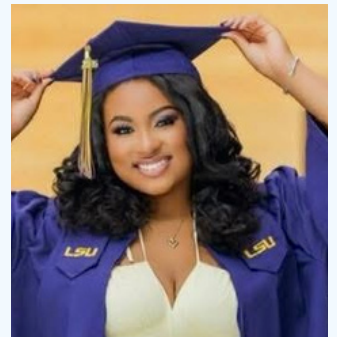
Kayla Roy*
Excite All Stars



Nylah Quillens*
Excite All Stars



Tahj White*
Excite All Stars



Lexi Reed*
Excite All Stars



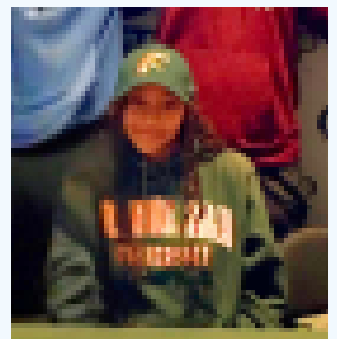
Zuri Jackson
Get A Grip Tennis



Sasha Niles
Get A Grip Tennis



Emily Douglas
Get A Grip Tennis



Johari Gorham
GTP Foundation



2026 NJTL High School & College* Grads!



Victoria Mann
GTP Foundation



Sedani Nagodawithana*
James Lewis E&T FDN



Abeni Perkins*
James Lewis E&T FDN



Anushka Arora*
James Lewis E&T FDN



Arien Thomas
MACH Academy, INC.



Jacob Joseph
MACH Academy, INC.



Savannah Mills
MACH Academy, INC.



Neiman Sneed*
MACH Academy, INC.



Maasiai Sales*
South Atlanta CTA



Ranan Givhan
South Atlanta CTA



Chloe Wilson
South Clayton CTA



2026 Southern Tennis Foundation College Scholarships Awarded to 10 High School Graduates

The Southern Tennis Foundation is delighted to introduce the STF Scholars of 2026. This year, we are proud to grant two scholarships of \$4,000 and eight scholarships of \$1,500 to these remarkable individuals. Each scholar has showcased outstanding talent on the tennis court while achieving excellence in their academics. Their dedication to success serves as a source of inspiration for young athletes everywhere, demonstrating that it is possible to balance intensive training with academic responsibilities.

As these scholars begin their new journeys, we are confident they will continue to thrive and make meaningful contributions both on and off the court. The perseverance, sportsmanship, and integrity they have cultivated through their tennis involvement will undoubtedly serve them well in their future pursuits.

For further details, please visit southerntennisfoundation.org.



Jake Barrow
NC



Abigail Black
AL



Mark Burnett
KY



Anneliese Deets
NC



Bo Dodds
TN



Sophia Gendlin
GA



Blessing Mbolinani Sara
KY



Campbell Norris
AL



Claudia Raiford
NC



Miniyah Wynn
GA



Chapter Stories

A's & Aces

By Anna Monhartova / New Orleans, LA

Quinn Gipson of A's & Aces is the 2026 Louisiana State Champion in the Boys' 12s & Under division. Quinn dominated the tournament, finishing his championship run with a commanding 6-1, 6-1 victory in the finals.

His dedication and hard work continue to pay off. Quinn is currently ranked No. 2 in Louisiana and holds a four-star rating from Tennis Recruiting. His success extends beyond the tennis court as well. Quinn is an honor-roll student at Audubon Charter School in New Orleans, where he is enrolled in the French immersion program. In addition to his athletic and academic accomplishments, Quinn was the winner of the 2024 USTA Southern Essay Contest, demonstrating excellence in both competition and the classroom.



Above the Net

By Caniece Haywood / McDonough, GA

The courts at Above the Net came alive with energy as families, parents, and young athletes gathered to celebrate National Tennis Month. The event was filled with excitement as players of all ages took to the court, building skills, confidence, and connections through the game.

A standout moment of the celebration was an inspiring performance by a local wheelchair athlete, whose incredible skills highlighted the inclusive and welcoming nature of tennis.

As we wrap up National Tennis Month, we extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us on the court. From first-time players to seasoned athletes, it was inspiring to see our community come together to learn, play, and grow through tennis. Thank you to our participants, coaches, volunteers, families, and supporters for making this celebration a success.

Here's to continuing the love of tennis all year long—we'll see you on the courts! 🎾💙



Chapter Stories

AYTEF

By Vi Tran / Peachtree Corners, GA

AYTEF is proud to celebrate an incredible accomplishment by four of our players who competed in the Spring 2026 10U JTT Cobb League. As members of their team, they helped lead a successful season, winning four out of six league matches and earning a spot in the State Qualifier Tournament.

The team's success continued at the State Qualifier, where they captured the championship title and secured their place in the State Championship. This achievement reflects the hard work, dedication, and growth these young athletes have demonstrated both on and off the court.

Their journey is a powerful example of how AYTEF's Player Pathway helps youth develop not only tennis skills, but also confidence, resilience, and a competitive spirit.



Camp HBCYouth

By Brian Wright / Roswell, GA

Camp HBCYouth is proud to continue expanding access to tennis and educational opportunities for youth through our partnership with the USTA Foundation as an official NJTL chapter.

During our 2026 summer camp season, campers at Clark Atlanta University, Tennessee State University and Morehouse College participated in weekly tennis instruction focused on skill development, sportsmanship, leadership, and healthy living. Through hands-on coaching and engaging activities, students were introduced to the fundamentals of tennis while building confidence both on and off the court.

Our tennis programming is designed to create pathways to lifelong participation in the sport while exposing youth to the college experience on HBCU campuses. Campers not only learn tennis fundamentals, but also engage in literacy, STEAM, wellness, and leadership programming throughout the summer.

We are grateful to the USTA Foundation and the NJTL network for helping us provide meaningful experiences that inspire our campers to dream bigger and achieve more.



Chapter Stories

Excite All Stars

By Gerald Williams / New Orleans, LA

We celebrated the culmination of our in-school tennis program for 3rd and 4th graders at Fannie C. Williams Charter School. Delivered during the school day, this program introduces fundamentals, footwork, and the joy of the game to students who might otherwise never pick up a racket — planting the seeds for the next Harlow



GTP Foundation

By Kali Slaydon / Greensboro, NC

GTP was honored to attend the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, which celebrated some of the state's most accomplished athletes. Among the Class of 2026 inductees was tennis legend John Isner.

A Greensboro native, Isner enjoyed one of the most successful careers in American tennis history. He reached a career-high ranking of World No. 8, won 16 ATP singles titles, and is perhaps best known for competing in the longest match in tennis history at Wimbledon in 2010.

Our athletes had the opportunity to meet Isner and learn from him and the other inductees. Hearing their stories of hard work, perseverance, and success was both inspiring and motivating. The experience provided valuable lessons and memories that our players will carry with them as they pursue their own goals on and off the court.



Chapter Stories

James Lewis Education and Tennis Foundation

By Rudy Lewis / Birmingham, AL

It was quite a day for the James Lewis Education and Tennis Foundation at the annual Alabama State Meeting.

We took four awards at the annual meeting and one award at the Hall of Fame banquet. Dayton was the 2025 NJTL Essay winner; James Giles took the Elaine Francis Junior Excellence Award; Cheryl Lockhart took the Special Event of the Year Award (Magic City Tennis Classic Tournament); I took the Official of the Year Award, and Donald Smith took the Hubert Kessler Award at the Hall of Fame banquet that evening. What a day for our foundation!! Congratulations to everyone!!



Kimberley Park Tennis Association

By Darryl Benbow / Winston-Salem, NC

A Clean Sweep! Congratulations to Kyndall Noel (left) and Mikayla Noel. Kyndall won the G14U Singles Championship, and together with her sister Mikayla, they also won the doubles championship. A clean sweep in the USTA L2 National Championship in Arlington, TX.



Chapter Stories

MACH Academy INC.

By Helen Thomas-Pope / Augusta, GA

Our younger athletes are making a strong impact on the tournament circuit. Caleb Burch and Mona Shukla, both competing in the 10 & Under division, have had outstanding performances. Each player participated in two tournaments and emerged victorious, showcasing remarkable skill, determination, and sportsmanship.

One of the most impressive accomplishments came from Sianna Burch, who competed in the USTA Level 6: The Festival Junior Tennis Tournament in Greenwood, SC, and captured the championship title in the 18 & Under division. What makes this achievement even more extraordinary is that Sianna is only 12 years old, competing successfully against much older and more experienced players.

Adding to the list of accomplishments, Morgan Henderson also earned a championship title in the Girls 18 & Under division at the USTA Level 5; GA Junior Open, in Rome, GA, demonstrating the hard work, commitment, and competitive spirit that continue to define MACH Academy, Inc. athletes.



Caleb Burch



Mona Shukla



Sianna Burch



Morgan Henderson

Margaret Allen Middle School

By Andy Mizell / Brentwood, TN

Margaret Allen Middle School's NJTL program is celebrating a major milestone in 2026. Since 2017, students have learned and played tennis using portable nets set up in the school's bus lane because no tennis courts were available on campus. Over time, the program became affectionately known as "Bus Lane Kids," reflecting its unique beginnings and mission of creating opportunities for youth through tennis.

After eight years of playing in the bus lane, construction officially began on permanent tennis courts in January. While the facility remains under construction, students are excited to see years of planning, advocacy, and community support becoming reality. The new courts will provide future generations of students with a dedicated place to learn, compete, and grow through the game of tennis.

The project represents what can happen when a community refuses to let the absence of facilities stand in the way of opportunity for young people.



Chapter Stories

One Community

By Katrina Wilson / Montgomery, AL

Tennis after school on the blacktop isn't about forehands and backhands. Its about laughter, friendship and enjoying those hours before parents arrive to pick kids up.



South Atlanta CTA

By Sam Kennedy / Fairburn, GA

We had an exciting and memorable experience at the South Fulton Tennis Center when professional tennis player Nick Kyrgios, a former world No. 5, visited the facility. Coming from Necker Island, his presence brought great energy and inspiration to our players and community.

During his visit, players had the opportunity to see a high-level professional up close and learn from his experience in the sport. His visit motivated young athletes to continue working hard and believing in their potential both on and off the court.

This was a unique moment for our chapter and a great example of how tennis can connect players to the global tennis community.



Chapter Stories

TennisWorks!

By Meg Morris / Columbus, GA

Summer is off to a great start for our TennisWorks! participants! We have six TennisWorks! camps scheduled this summer—three in June and three in July—providing local youth with opportunities to stay active, learn new skills, and have fun both on and off the court.

Our first camp kicked off last week at Frank Chester Recreation Center, and this week's camp is underway at Cooper Creek Tennis Center. Each camp includes tennis instruction, fun recreational and educational activities, and lunch for all participants.

We're excited to spend the summer helping young people build confidence, develop healthy habits, and discover the lifelong benefits of tennis through TennisWorks!



United Tennis Organization

By Belen Gomez-Jordana / Gastonia, NC

For the third year, United Tennis Organization celebrated National Tennis Month by hosting two free community events where almost 70 people had the opportunity to experience the sport of tennis and enjoy quality time with friends and family in a fun and welcoming environment.

At United Tennis Organization, we believe that tennis is a sport for everyone, and we remain committed to making the game accessible to more children, youth, and families in our community. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make these events a success!



NJTL Spotlight

A's and Aces, LA



Above The Net, GA



Ace 2 Deuce, MS



NJTL Spotlight

Atlanta Youth Tennis and Education Foundation, GA



Camp HBCYouth, GA

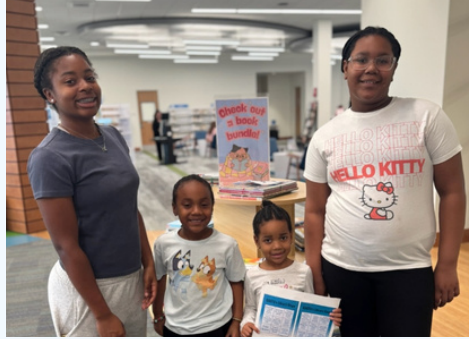


Excite All Stars, LA



NJTL Spotlight

Get A Grip Tennis Association, GA



GTP Foundation, NC



James Lewis Education and Tennis Foundation, INC., AL



NJTL Spotlight

Margaret Allen Middle School, TN



Small is the New Big, AR



South Atlanta Community Tennis Association, GA



NJTL Spotlight

TennisWorks!, GA



United Tennis Organization, NC



Ashley Cooke

2026 USTA Southern Intern
South Clayton CTA, GA



News & Announcements

USTAF College Scholarship Recipients • Dillan LaFrance - A's & Aces • Ranan Givhan - South Atlanta CTA	HBCU Recruiting Showcase • September 18-19, 2026 • www.hbcutennis.com
2026 USTA HBCU Puissance Althea Gibson Scholarship Winners: • Bryce Drayton, Atlanta, GA; Morehouse College • Danielle Hood, Atlanta, GA; Savannah State University	Program Grants • Application opens December 1, 2026
2026 Junior Tennis Champions Center High Performance Camp in College Park, MD • Kaleb Phillips, Family Biz Builder, MS • Devin Sellars, Family Biz Builder, MS • Madison Wellons; AYSI, GA	Southern Tennis Foundation Scholarship • Application opens in 2027
Junior Financial Assistance • Click here for the fact sheet	Facility Assistance Grant • Application closes September 30, 2026
Click here to view the 2026 Lenny Simpson NJTL Leadership Camp Video!	NJTL Apprenticeship Grant • Application opens in March 2027

Thanks for all you do!

