



USTA NORTH CAROLINA

BILLIE JEAN KING RECEIVES FED CUP HONOR

Promoting Youth Tennis

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A quick Google search of the words "Billie Jean King" leads to countless articles with headlines that almost always include the words "tennis legend."

And though the tennis legend, received the Fed Cup Commitment award Sunday for her lifetime of service to the competition, King says it's not the stars who deserve the attention. "The people who are helping the children – those are the real heroes and heroes. We are motivators when you're at the top. We can motivate and inspire. I have to thank everyone for doing what I call the real work, which is on the grassroots level."

Getting tennis to take root in the younger generation is a major focus of USTA North Carolina and USTA. Staff spent the days preceding the Fed Cup first round tie between the U.S. and Australia hosting more than 1,000 children in multiple clinics.

Students from public and private schools in and around Asheville as well as players from North Carolina's 13 National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) chapters were able to try tennis, play tennis, and spend some time with the U.S. Fed Cup team.

"The community, I can tell, has really gotten behind it. When you create excitement, children see excitement, they get excited," says King. "I think it's great what [we've] done. I think it's great that [we have taken] advantage of this week and had them in here, let them on that court where the players play. They love that."

The 2018 and 2019 Fed Cup experiences have served as a spark for tennis growth in western North Carolina, and the USTA's Net Generation is one of the newest ways to engage future tennis enthusiasts. Launched in 2017, Net Generation is dedicated to welcoming youth players, ages 5 to 18, to the game by focusing on empowerment, unity and play. The platform provides adaptable curricula, teaching and learning tools, communications materials and fun participation incentives.

"There's all kinds of unbelievable opportunities in tennis," says King. "This is a sport you can play for life. We don't have the concussion challenges of a lot of other sports. You have to use your upper and lower body, which is so important to proper growth and development. There's no reason tennis can't have millions of young people playing."

USTA North Carolina is doing its part to add to those millions, with Net Generation in more than 70 schools across the state and participation numbers second to Georgia within the southern section.

To learn more about tennis programming and resources available in your community, contact Robert Hogewood at USTA North Carolina or visit netgeneration.usta.com.