

May 2011



*Enriching the lives of children and adults with intellectual disabilities.*

### **Recreational or Competitive? Which Kind of Tennis Do We Promote?**

There is a common question faced by parents of our new participants: is Special Pops Tennis for recreational or competitive tennis players?

I am pleased to give the answer: **YES!**

Given our mission to enrich lives, we recognize that an enriching experience may come from being with your friends, winning a tennis match, attending a dance, getting a T-shirt, making new friends, or just being somewhere other than at home. The key is providing an opportunity for engagement. A person who is engaged in something important is a happier, healthier person. For our athletes, either recreational or competitive tennis can fill the bill.

Our aim at Special Pops Tennis is to provide a safe, fun and nurturing environment that focuses on the personal learning life skills that will be valuable both on and off the court. Tennis gives us a vehicle that we use to create a learning environment.

Our volunteers each understand sportsmanship, teamwork, and respect. Our challenge is to help our athletes understand these values that carry over into their everyday lives.

So whether an athlete comes to Special Pops Tennis merely to enjoy a weekly outing with friends or because really wants to learn how to be a better tennis player, know that the athlete will find volunteers ready to help meet those goals. And rest assured that the tennis lesson will include teaching life skills that make both the athlete and the volunteer better people.



### **Special Pops Delegation Does Dothan!**

The weekend of April 15th, while thunderstorms battered much of the Southeast, 16 Special Pops Tennis athletes were in Dothan, AL for the Southeast Open tennis tournament.

After arrival on Friday, the athletes had a spirited practice session to prepare for competition. Bright and early Saturday, the team gathered at the Westgate Tennis Center for a full day of singles and doubles competition.



The team was a terrific cross section of all Special Pops Tennis sites. The 16 athletes and Head of Delegation **Jeanie Hamm** were from six metro Atlanta counties and train at 9 of the 17 Special Pops Tennis sites.

The results of the competition included 14 of our 16 athletes collecting at least one gold or silver medal. However, the greatest recognition for the delegation came at the pizza party and dance on Saturday night. During the awards ceremony, Special Pops Tennis athlete **Ashley Humphre** was selected as the recipient of the Dothan Tennis Association Sportsmanship Award (Female).

Congratulations to Ashley and all the athletes for their great representation both on and off the court. Also, our five coaches/chaperones deserve special thanks for making the trip and ensuring the safety and well-being of our athletes. (Click Ashley's image to see the full-size photo.)

## Student Volunteers Score Aces And the Community is the Winner

Our corps of caring volunteers who make the work of Special Pops possible includes community-conscious students.

On April 28, student volunteers at the Special Pops training site at Wesleyan School were recognized at the Wesleyan Senior Honors Day Awards assembly. **Turner Ables** received the Serve His League Award for work with Special Pops Tennis during his 4 years at Wesleyan. Presenting the award, **Julie Pack**, Serve His League Coordinator, also noted Turner's role as a Unified Partner at the Summer Games and the Fall Clas



Honored as Valedictorian, **Kailee Trum** also received the Daughters of the American Revolution Award. This year, Kailee and Turner assumed leadership roles at the Wesleyan site under the direction of Site Coordinator **Lou Ann Lebovitz**. Special Pops Tennis thanks Wesleyan School for providing such outstanding young volunteers! (Click the image to see the full-size photo.)

## Special Pops Stars Come Out at Night Not all fun is in the sun...



Monday nights at East Roswell Park you will find several Special Pops athletes training hard. The night time sessions aren't just a result of great Spring weather. East Roswell is a year-round training site. Efforts are ably coordinated by **Julie Hansen**, backed by court coordinators **Pam Ellis** and **Valerie Mercier** and made possible by a dedicated group of adult volunteers. (Click the image to see the full-size photo.)

### Off-Court Feature

**Sherry Adams**, a seven-year-old athlete from Deerlick Park in Douglas County, recently underwent major surgery. Just weeks later with a walker and two heavily bandaged legs, she returned to practice tennis. Her mom said "she insisted on coming to Special Pops Tennis practice."

*Welcome back, Sherry - you epitomize the spirit of our athletes and volunteers!*

## Join Our Team

The "thrill of victory" doesn't require having a racket in hand. Our volunteers will tell you they share in every victory - on and off the court - that our athletes achieve. If you would like to play a part, just go to [SpecialPopsTennis.com](http://SpecialPopsTennis.com) or send a note to either **Martha Pedrick** ([mpedrick@mindspring.com](mailto:mpedrick@mindspring.com)) or **Vick Bennett** ([vicben50@hotmail.com](mailto:vicben50@hotmail.com)).

### • Important Dates •

May 13th: Coaches' Clinic – Rockdale County

May 20th – 22nd: Special Olympics Georgia Summer Games – Emory University

Please visit our website at [www.specialpopstennis.com](http://www.specialpopstennis.com).  
And for all of you who help us help others, **THANK YOU!**