



Mitch 'n Friends Continues Its Legacy With Mitch and Father, Kevin, Still At The Helm

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Kevin McGinnis, the creator of the Mitch and Friends Night of Futures, and his son, Mitch, himself, beamed with pride when interviewed about the future of the clinic named for his son, a longtime manager and supporter of Edwardsville High School tennis. The family was very excited to be back after its absence because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"It's great," McGinnis said. "We're excited to be back and have our first clinic in two years. We're really excited about partnering with the Edwardsville YMCA and transitioning, perhaps - well, not perhaps, but we are transitioning into the YMCA taking over the program and running with it and hopefully growing the Mitch n Friends program."

The takeover of the program by the Edwardsville Y is a very positive outgrowth for Mitch n Friends and it's something Kevin McGinnis is most proud of.

"Well, we're proud of what we've done over the last 12-plus years," McGinnis said, "and we've had many kids and young adults receive free tennis lessons from our group. And it's more than just tennis, it's more about fun. Everyone involved gets excited about it and we can tell the friends, the Mitch 'n Friends friends have a good time too and get excited about it."

McGinnis is very optimistic about the future growth of the program under the auspices of the YMCA.

"Well, I think with the YMCA's experience and ability to put the time and sweat and tears into it," McGinnis said, "they can grow this thing and grow it to a place where it wasn't before. And we're excited about that potential."

McGinnis is equally proud of the program's accomplishments and its number one goal -- having fun.

"We're proud of what we've done and all the fun we've had over the years," McGinnis said, "and in 10-12 years, I've seen a lot of our friends improve their tennis game. A lot of these guys are good tennis players. And that's really cool for me to see."

Mitch McGinnis, the namesake of the program, also had his usual good time being with his friends and playing the game he loves.

"Good," Mitch said when asked how he was feeling. "Feeling good and having fun."

He was also enjoying just playing again after the long break.

"Yeah I am playing," Mitch said. "But I've been playing pickleball."

Pickleball, a sport that's been gaining in popularity around the nation, is an offshoot of tennis, with smaller courts, rackets, and plastic balls. And both sports share a common goal: Once again, having fun.

"Both," Mitch said when asked about which game is his favorite.

Of course, Mitch was very happy to be back after the long absence because of the pandemic and other circumstances.

The future of Mitch 'n Friends is a very bright one, indeed.

"We're looking at what we will do moving forward," the YMCA's Brandon Bell said. "So our initial thoughts are it will be more than just a one-time a year event, that we will stay free for the community, but we're looking it being the Mitch 'n Friends program, basically a special needs tennis program once a week, free, where we offer for that program free and all ending each year with the big event, which will be the Mitch 'n Friends event here during Futures week.

"The collaboration has been absolutely amazing, and that's how you get things done," Bell continued. "In this community and every community is to collaborate with others for the greater good of our entire community. That's what we're looking forward to and it's just our pleasure to take the Mitch 'n Friends program and turn it into a year-round program, but still have this event during Futures week.

"I just thank everybody involved with the Mitch 'n Friends program to this day. Kevin, Mitch, and their whole family have been absolutely amazing to work with and it's good for the Y, it's good for the community, but it's absolutely our pleasure and a blessing for us to be able to run this program."