



First Clover Leaf Bank of Edwardsville sponsors Kids' Night at the Futures event

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – One of the key ways to grow a sport is to get the attention of people as early as possible, especially to kids.

Tennis is no exception, and thanks to First Clover Leaf Bank of Edwardsville, who sponsored the event, the Edwardsville Futures USTA tournament held its Kids' Night at the Futures event at the Edwardsville High School tennis courts Tuesday night, which combined a introductory clinic with arts and drawing and pizza and drinks for the participants.

“We've sponsored this part of the tournament since the start (in 2011),” said First Clover Leaf's Paul Abert. “The USTA has several programs designed to introduce tennis to kids, and this event is part of that. We're hoping we're going to get about 80 kids to take part; some of them will be playing tennis for the first time.

“It's a great way to introduce the sport to younger kids and we're glad we're a part of it.”

Participants were divided into age groups and taken to various courts to either receive a basic introduction to tennis or to work on specific skills related to the game. Members of Edwardsville High's boys and girls tennis teams served as coaches for the event while parents looked on at the activities taking place.

One such parent was Shelly Peck, an Edwardsville native who currently lives in Granite City; she brought her daughter Alivia to Tuesday's get-together. “Alivia took some lessons in Granite City last summer and also came here and she really liked it,” Peck said. “She really enjoys playing the game.

“She's currently taking lessons right now, and they've been very good.”

Alivia herself has some modest goals for her future. “I'd like to go to (a Grand Slam) tournament,” she said.

The Edwardsville Children's Museum also took part in Tuesday's event; they provided shields, masks and other items to allow children to draw on them and wear them during the event. “We're taking pictures of the kids making their shields or masks and putting them on our Facebook page, said Museum Operations Director Lindley White. “We were asked by (tournament director) Dave (Lipe) if we'd like to take part in the program on Family Day (which takes place Saturday) and we added this on as well.

“It's been a fun thing for us; it lets us get out in the community and show people what we have to offer.”





