

RC Youth Services Students of Success Play Tennis

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For the last few months, RC Tennis volunteer coaches have unloaded tennis rackets, nets, and balls at three Rockingham County Middle Schools to introduce the game of tennis to members of Students of Success afterschool program.

Students of Success (SOS) is an after school prevention program of Rockingham County Youth Services at three RCS middle schools led by Coordinator Lynn Flowers. SOS goals include improving academic performance, developing civic responsibility and increasing parental involvement. The SOS program includes tutoring, mentoring and enrichment activities throughout the school year. High School members of the Students of Promise (SOP) program serve as role models and tutors for (SOS) middle school youth.

At Rockingham County Middle School, SOS youth played tennis in the wrestling gym, the sixth grade hallway and on the courts at Rockingham Community College. The Reidsville Middle School SOS program set up a mini-court on the concrete pad outside their back door, in the choir room, and even played a tiny-tournament on 6 mini-courts indoors on a rainy day. Their first on-court experience is at Jaycee Park in Reidsville. Western Rockingham's SOS program has had fair weather for on-court tennis fun at the MMRC's Carlyle Tennis Courts in Madison. (See photos).

According to the 2013 *USTA Serves Special Report, More than a Sport – Tennis, Education and Health*, "tennis participation positively influences the lives of US youth across all socioeconomic levels". About 50,000 students in eighth-twelfth grades are surveyed every year to gather pertinent information pertaining to educational outcomes, health behaviors, social engagement and substance use. Since 2006, Monitoring the Future (MTF) surveys began gathering information about specific sports that students participated in – including tennis.

What is the good news for these SOS youth and the growing number of Rockingham County students who are playing tennis for the first time? Youth who play tennis

- Get better grades,
- Have college aspirations
- Are better behaved
- Are more community-minded and well-rounded
- Are healthy and less prone to risky behaviors.

Through a generous grant from Southern Tennis Patrons Foundation, each SOS location will receive a complete set of youth tennis equipment and coaching support to help these students continue to "find themselves in the game".

Follow Rockingham County Tennis Association on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/RCYouthTennis and visit our webpage at www.usta.rockingham.com for more information about youth tennis events in our county.