






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First Serve helps in sport, life

By Kelly Tucker
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First Serve, a nonprofit organization based in Fort Lauderdale, provides a comprehensive life-skills program for underprivileged children between the ages of 5 and 14 that incorporates both educational mentoring and tennis instruction.


First Serve is the only organization that utilizes tennis with the sole purpose of empowering youth with the skills, values and experience they need to be responsible, productive and successful in life.

▼ ADVERTISEMENT ▼ There are 17 First Serve chapters nationwide, seven of which are in Florida including one in Tallahassee at 2940 Grady Road. The local chapter has been operating since May 2004 with the administrative and financial support of the Tallahassee Housing Authority in partnership with the Tallahassee Tennis Association.

There are 16 youngsters enrolled in the program with an additional 15 who receive only tennis instruction. The kids in the program get life-skills coaching, help with their homework and tennis instruction two days a week for 90 minutes each day.

Student-athletes from FSU and FAMU have supported this program since its inception by playing tennis with the kids and serving as role models.

The First Serve program is not just about tennis but also about teaching life skills using a curriculum that was developed by a core group of individuals who designed the First Tee Life Skills Experience, a golf/life skills curriculum, that has reached more than a half-million young people since 2001.


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This curriculum has three levels: Game, Set and Match. There are various units within each level of the curriculum that teach different life skills. All life-skills coaches receive comprehensive training on how to present the curriculum in a creative and fun way that will help the children learn.

With the efforts of Joe Beckham, FSU professor and faculty athletic representative, it is anticipated that the program will expand to the FSU campus in fall 2008. A management agreement has been developed and will be used to implement the program with the help of participating organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club of the Big Bend, FSU athletics, the Center for Civic Education at FSU and First Serve International.

The Boys and Girls Club of the Big Bend will have the primary role in selecting participants for the program and will provide transportation for the students.

FSU's tennis teams will host the students on campus and provide the tennis instruction. FSU's Department of Intercollegiate Athletics, through its Student Services Division, will provide an Internet connection and desk space for the First Serve program director. FSU's Center for Civic Education will provide volunteer tutors to work with the kids on life skills.

First Serve International will continue to provide the instructional materials, training for the life skills coach (i.e., program coordinator) and opportunities for participation at regional and national first serve events.

To volunteer for the program or for questions, contact Kelly Tucker, life-skills coach and program coordinator, at 445-4779.

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