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Area youth players get academic acclaim

Blythe Calfee in Willis receives facility award

By DALE ROBERTSON Copyright 2009 Houston Chronicle

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Two Houston-area youngsters who participate at the Zina Garrison Academy were among the recently announced winners of the First Serve National Student Athlete competition.

Mou Doddipalli, a 12-year-old straight-A student, earned a first place in the boy's division, good for a \$5,000 scholarship and a trip to the U.S. Open, which began Monday. He also received the 2008 Andre Agassi Sportsmanship Award. Ana Ruiz, 15, was second in the girl's division, good for a \$2,500 scholarship.

A point system that combines year-round success in the classroom with results on the court in USTA-sanctioned tournaments is used to

determine the First Serve award winners.

Doddipalli and Ruiz will be recognized for their achievements at the 2009 "Go Wild for Zina" gala Nov. 7 at the Houston Museum of Natural Science. They are among some 20,000 kids who have played tennis at Garrison Academy since it was founded in 1993 by the 1990 Wimbledon runner-up and her coach, John Wilkerson, in 1993.

In other news

- Willis center honored — The USTA has named the Blythe Calfee Tennis Center in Willis as one of 12 winners in the 28th annual USTA Outstanding Facility Awards Program. The Willis complex, built for Willis High School's team in 1988, was extensively renovated in 2007.

"It has gone above and beyond to establish a superior tennis experience for the patrons and community at large," said Kurt Kamperman, the USTA's chief executive for community tennis. "We are proud to honor their achievements."

- Schuettes feted — Bambi Schuette and Emily Schaefer, who directs the city's tennis program, will be attending the U.S. Open this weekend as guests of the USTA for having won the 2008 Golden Slam in mother-and-daughter competition.

- ZAT this weekend — The Houston Tennis Association HP/NJTL Zone Advancement Tournament benefiting the HTA/National Junior Tennis and Learning program will be held Saturday and Sunday at six tennis centers. More than 500 kids are entered.

By selling raffle tickets to a variety of events, including the U.S. Open, the HTA has raised more than \$20,000 for the HTA/NJTL program, which serves more than 5,000 youngsters in the Houston area through the Houston Parks and Recreation Department at some 35 parks citywide.

dale.robertson@chron.com

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