

The Ojai “Serves” the Youth

While planning and executing The Ojai tennis tournament takes many months and several hundred volunteers, the Ojai Valley Tennis Club (OVTC) has a second important year-round objective, and that is to raise funds to conduct and support various programs that introduce and encourage the sport of tennis among the Ojai Valley youth.

The OVTC’s Youth Tennis Committee works with the Ojai Unified School District, the city of Ojai Recreation Department and most of the Ojai tennis professionals, along with scores of dedicated volunteers to organize programs that introduce, develop and popularize tennis for children of all ages. Substantial financial support goes to the Ojai Recreation Department’s youth tennis programs managed and run by Rick Thompson. Thompson teaches tennis at beginner and advanced levels, and he conducts summer programs and after-school leagues for the Ojai youngsters, where they also learn the values of teamwork and good sportsmanship. Rick is also instrumental in organizing and training the ball boys and girls for The Ojai. The OVTC Youth Tennis Committee also supports the Junior Ventura County Tennis Association and other youth tennis events and organizes several special youth functions during the year. The main ones are :

- The “Ten-and-Under” youth tennis program (developed by the USTA and formerly known as QuickStart) managed by Philippe Gache, and again supported by several volunteers, is brought to all Ojai Valley elementary schools during the school year. Now in its seventh year, and with more than 1500 youngsters who have participated in the program, this is clearly very successful and much-appreciated by the teachers, parents and most importantly the kids. Twice a year, in December and April, a QuickStart challenge tournament is organized in Libbey Park, where the program participants can demonstrate the tennis skills acquired throughout the year. The April Challenge is now incorporated as part of The Ojai.
- During The Ojai up to eight youth tennis players selected by the Youth Tennis Committee are awarded prizes and scholarships for tennis clinics, summer camps and individual professional tennis lessons donated by the Ojai tennis professionals. Their selection takes into consideration sportsmanship, ability, motivation and teamwork.
- The High-Performance Tennis Clinic is now in its tenth year. Select young tennis players are nominated by their coaches to participate in a day of intense tennis instruction and match strategy. All Ojai tennis professionals donate their time and expertise for this special high-intensity event.
- The Parent/Child Holiday Challenge brings together older and younger players on the courts over the Christmas holidays. Last January the fourth annual event was held under the leadership of Craig Fugle with substantial support from Rick Thompson and several volunteers. Some 64 adults and juniors formed 32 teams that battled it out on all Libbey Park courts, while making sure that both young and old enjoyed a healthy and fun family time. Epic confrontations occurred when grandmother and grandson played father and daughter, or uncle and nephew played mother and son. The combinations were countless, the dynamics were remarkable, and a grand time was had by all.

If you would like to volunteer or financially support these programs, please make a tax-deductible contribution to OVTC Youth Tennis, P.O.Box 482, Ojai, CA 93024. For more information please contact Jakob Vos, Chair, Youth Tennis Programs, at jhmvos@aol.com.