

CROSSCOURT

a little girl's long journey to tennis



From Cameroon to KC,
Liz Jeukeng finds safe haven
to pursue a love for tennis

When Liz Jeukeng and her father, Nassaïre Nkamgouo, flew together to Miami in April of this year to attend a select USTA Development Camp for talented 10-and-under girls — girls like Liz — it was the father and daughter's second trip to the Florida city.

The first, in 1998, was a harrowing ordeal not soon forgotten. Survival and a new start in life were all that mattered back then. Their second visit to Miami was one to remember, with a more certain future in store for both parent and child.

The reason for the return trip — tennis — was trivial compared to their 1998 voyage.

The eight-year journey between their two flights to Miami is a story of persistence and determination by both father and daughter.

FEARING FOR HIS LIFE Born in Cameroon in May of 1996, Liz knew little of the rigors that were a part of her young life, or those of her father's. Instability seemed to always have Cameroon on the verge of collapsing into civil war, with oppressive government controls ruling nearly every aspect of the citizens' daily lives. Political tensions finally boiled over in 1998 during Cameroon President Paul Biya's re-election bid. That year, with his work office closed and bank account frozen, Nkamgouo, fearing for his life and that of his young daughter, fled to the United States.

And that was the easy part of the journey.

"We had to get out, it was so bad," says Nkamgouo.

Leaving his wife and other family members behind, Nkamgouo and young Liz boarded a plane bound for the Bahamas, via Belgium, New York and Miami. With a visa granted only to work in the Bahamas, however, the father and daughter were stopped, then detained in Miami and questioned by United States Immigration and

See **LONG JOURNEY** • Page 4



**Husband-Wife
title sealed
with a kiss**



**League wins
cause for
celebration**





The USTA Missouri Valley publishes **CrossCourt** quarterly, focusing specifically on the members and events in the section. Your feedback is welcome.



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We encourage you to "go to the net" and keep updated at your USTA Missouri Valley Section Web site.

Learn more... Stay informed... Your section Web site is a great source for upcoming events, features, photos, results and more. Plus, you can download back issues of **CrossCourt**.

Now's the time to think 'young' as we grow the game

As we at the USTA like to constantly remind everyone, tennis is a lifetime sport. You can be swinging a racquet long after you've qualified for AARP membership, started collecting Social Security and even celebrated the birth of a great grandchild or two. Heck, you can play tennis with the great grandkids. It truly is the game that never gets old and will keep you young.

But with school back in session, now is the perfect time for us to really think "young" in a very literal sense. If we're to grow the game, we need to get kids off the couch and on the court.

First, let's not lose the kids who play high school tennis — about 300,000 a year — just because they've "grown up" and graduated. Only a select few will play NCAA tennis, but we can keep them all playing. Tennis on Campus (see page 6) is a growing program that can keep former high school players raising a racquet, remaining part of a team, and making new friends at their college or university.

Tennis on Campus is also a great way to introduce some new kids to the game. They can start

playing tennis in college and keep on playing right through their 50th reunion.

So, we've got a good program for the college "kids," and remember League players to recruit some fresh faces for your teams. If someone has turned 19, he or she is old enough to play USTA League Tennis. But, of course, we need to concentrate on "hooking them when they're young." Support or start a Junior Team Tennis

(see page 5) program where you live.

Remember, it's your game. It's our game, and let's be sure to pass it on, so tennis will also be the next generation's game.



Congratulations to all our League section championship teams (see page 7). Now it is on to Nationals, where we will accept nothing less than bringing home the crown. Actually, we just want you to give it your best shot, and keep rule No. 1 in mind: Have a smashing good time.



Finally, everyone is invited to attend our Annual Conference. Have a good time. Bring your racquet. Meet Luke Jensen!

all the **Racquet**

Mary Buschmann
USTA Missouri Valley Executive Director



Luke Jensen to participate in section's Annual Conference

Luke Jensen will bring all his enthusiasm and his passion for the game — and, yes, his tennis racquet — to the USTA Missouri Valley Annual Conference, to be held **Dec. 8-10, 2006**, at the Sheraton Hotel in Overland Park, Kan.

Jensen, the 1993 French Open doubles champ, will participate in the Coaches Clinic on Friday, Dec. 8, be the featured speaker that evening and serve as the master of ceremonies during the Section Awards/Hall of Fame Induction luncheon Saturday, Dec. 9.

Jensen, best known for his ability to play the game either right- or left-handed, was recently named the head women's tennis coach at the University of Syracuse (Syracuse, N.Y.).

The Coaches Clinic is for both high school coaches and those coaches conducting junior high tennis programs. It will be a bring-your-racquet, have-plenty-of-on-the-court-fun style clinic, focusing on the following:

- ◆ On-court drills
- ◆ The latest strength and conditioning methods designed specifically for tennis

◆ Proper nutrition and hydration

Other workshops during the conference will concentrate on recruiting, retaining and rewarding volunteers, as well as on promoting more diversity in tennis.

An opportunity to complete holiday shopping will also be available. A silent auction featuring several different tennis items, artwork, trips and much more will be conducted during the conference. All proceeds will go to the Missouri Valley Tennis Foundation.

NOV. 17 DEADLINE The deadline for reservations at the Sheraton Hotel is Friday, Nov. 17. Call 913-234-2100 to book a room. Those attending the conference receive a special rate, if they reserve their room prior to Nov. 17.



Luke Jensen will be a fixture at this year's Annual Conference. For more information about the conference, visit missourivalley.usta.com as event details are finalized.



Nebraska volunteer earns National honor

It would be difficult to find a more unassuming volunteer leader than Jane Hines of Omaha, Neb., though it's no secret that there are few who help grow the game of tennis more than she does.

For her considerable efforts helping make tennis a vibrant sport in her hometown, Hines was recently recognized as the USTA National Volunteer of the Month (August 2006). Her time and dedication to tennis has now been recognized on a national scale.

But the tennis community in Omaha has long been aware of all Hines has done, and is grateful for her labor of love.

"Jane is a tireless worker and someone who is very thorough. She crosses all her *t*'s and dots all her *i*'s," said Larry Newton, immediate past president of the Nebraska District. "Jane has a real concern for people in need and trying to open doors for them in tennis, whether it's some of the special events we have here in Omaha or other grassroots events. She's certainly been instrumental in the growth that we've had here in Omaha."

A PEOPLE PERSON Hines serves as the president of the Omaha Tennis Association (OTA), but that only scratches the surface of how she contributes to tennis.

"It's the people in tennis that keep me motivated," Hines said. "I have learned so much through the many marvelous relationships that I have formed through all the tennis activities in which I have been involved all these years. I am fed by these relationships."

In the Nebraska District Hines' duties go far beyond her day job as the director of marketing at The Tennis Club in Omaha. Hines, chair of a diversity committee, helps to coordinate and put on several multicultural outreach clinics each year. She is active in after-school tennis programs and works in the junior high performance program with the Nebraska Competition Training Centers. If that weren't enough, she assists with hosting local Special Olympics and Tennis Block Party events, and she helps in fundraising efforts and volunteer recruitment for

the OTA.

"Jane's enthusiasm and love of the game is never-ending," said Mary Buschmann, executive director of the USTA Missouri Valley. "She is constantly looking for new areas to introduce tennis. She is a great leader, and her outreach in the Omaha community is inspiring. Her smile is always there when promoting her passion."

SPREADING THE WORD Hines' biggest success is getting the word out about tennis events in and around Omaha. The Omaha Tennis Association Web site – **omahatennis.org** – is a shining example of how to keep a community plugged in. The site is complete with updated USTA League standings, adult and junior information, and photos of many events. Hines' other communications roles are maintaining the Web site for the USTA Nebraska District and writing *The Tennis Racket*, a newsletter for the OTA.

"I am an extremely passionate person," said Hines, who has two children, Melissa (24) and Eric (21). Eric plays tennis at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

"I work very hard in the areas in life that I know to be important: faith, family, friends, fitness, work and service to others. I am very deliberate about setting aside time to

include activities that enhance those areas in my life and in the lives of others. Tennis is the venue that encompasses them all."

UNABLE TO COMPETE A former NCAA Academic All-American who played basketball and tennis at the University of Hawaii, Hines is a United States Professional Tennis Association certified teaching professional (Pro 1 designation), and likes to be on the court, getting up close and personal. Though a 1990 car accident robbed Hines of the ability to compete, it didn't come close to taking her passion for the game.

"Most people are unaware I am unable to play tennis anymore," said Hines, who suffered severe lower body, back, neck and arm damage in the accident. "I have not played competitively since. The injuries that I sustained forced me into more of an administrative role as a tennis professional. That experience has been very beneficial as I transition into my current volunteer roles. But I have never allowed myself to become disconnected to the game I love."



Jane Hines' Labor of Love



A HELPING HAND

John Bregin, president of the Heart of America District, tosses a ball to a Kansas City, Mo., youngster taking her first swings of the racquet during a recent clinic. The USTA depends on volunteers to perform a wide variety of tasks, from operating tournament desks, to assisting at clinics, to launching or operating programs, to maintaining district Web sites. Learn more about how you can lend a helping hand by clicking the volunteer option at missourivalley.usta.com. The USTA can find a volunteer opportunity to meet your interests and abilities.

Naturalization Services (INS) officials. Speaking very little English in a city he knew nothing about — with little money in his pocket, no connections, no future, a 2-year old toddler in tow — Nkamgouo was frustrated.

After a week's detainment in Miami, the INS deemed Nkamgouo and young Liz met the standard of "credible fear" for political refugees and released them.

Now, with \$3 to his name, Nkamgouo and his daughter were on the streets in Miami for three days, begging for assistance, spending what little money they had on hamburger buns from McDonald's. Then he found a business card at the bottom of his duffel bag — the card of a man he met on the Belgium-to-New York leg of the journey. The man, Dupli Samdumu, was, like Nkamgouo, an engineer, and he had said that if ever Nkamgouo and Liz made their way to Kansas City they should contact him.

Nkamgouo dialed Samdumu's Kansas City number from Miami. It was a fortuitous call.

"At that point, I didn't know where to go. I didn't know anyone here but Dupli," says Nkamgouo, who accepted Samdumu's offer to come live with his family, to help Nkamgouo and Liz start life anew. "Really, it was like having an angel watching out for me."

Father and daughter packed up what little they had that day, and continued their journey, this time to Kansas City, a 19-hour bus trip from Miami.

REUNITED Nkamgouo did every odd job he could find those first few months, as he and Liz stayed with Samdumu, before eventually landing a housekeeping job at a hotel in Kansas City. For a highly educated man, those were the toughest months. War ripped his family apart, with no certain reunion in the near or distant future. His little daughter needed stability, but he had to work double shifts to afford their modest needs.

The struggle in Cameroon had been to survive, in Kansas City just to make ends meet. There was no time for play, no time for tennis, Nkamgouo's sport of choice.

Then in June of 2000, all the pieces of a broken family's life began to come together. That month Nkamgouo obtained his professional engineering license in the United States. Two months later, he landed an engineering job and reunited with his wife.

Stability and order returned to his and Liz's lives. Fun and recreation, including tennis, also became a part of their lives again.

FREE COURTS Samdumu was a recreational tennis player at Fort Minor Park in Kansas City, and Nkamgouo remembers gazing at the sight of free, empty courts in America with astonishment. In Cameroon, tennis courts are rare, and open courts

nearly impossible to find, almost 100 percent of them being privately owned.

It was a summer day in 2000, at a Loose Park public court in Kansas City, that Nkamgouo and a then 4-year-old Liz met Jennifer Waterman. While having a casual hit around with some friends, Waterman heard the family on another court conversing in French, a language she also speaks.

"I went over to talk to them, and just to show them a couple of things," said Waterman. "(Nkamgouo) didn't really play tennis at all. They were very appreciative. Their English was still very basic, too."

Nkamgouo and Waterman had a long conversation that day, and Waterman invited Liz to attend her National Junior Tennis League classes.

Liz did. Her parents enrolled her in the Stephanie Waterman Wholechild Program. Under the tutelage of Waterman's daughter Kilmeny, a former University of Kansas women's coach, and with her family's support, Liz's game has been on a fast track to success in the USTA Missouri Valley and beyond.

NATIONALLY RANKED Liz, 10, is now one of the top players in the nation at her age, a prospect with tons of raw ability. In late April of this year, she was chosen to attend a USTA High Performance Camp in Key Biscayne, Fla., an indication of her long-term potential.

"I was really excited to get to go to Florida," she says. "I learned a lot."

This summer, she won the Girls' 12's division at the Terrific 32, the Missouri Valley's top summer junior tournament, and is currently ranked No. 4 in the section and No. 73 in the nation in Girls' 12's.

"All girls at this age — from my point of view — have the talent to be as good as they dream," said USTA National coach Jai DiLouie, who was one of the coaches

at the USTA National Development Camp. "Liz is certainly something special now. She's a very good athlete and moves extremely well. Her footwork, balance and ball-striking are terrific. She's also a good thinker at such a young age."

With a tough road behind her and a tennis future that may be limitless, Liz is concentrating on getting better each day. "I want to keep practicing to get as good as I can be," she says.

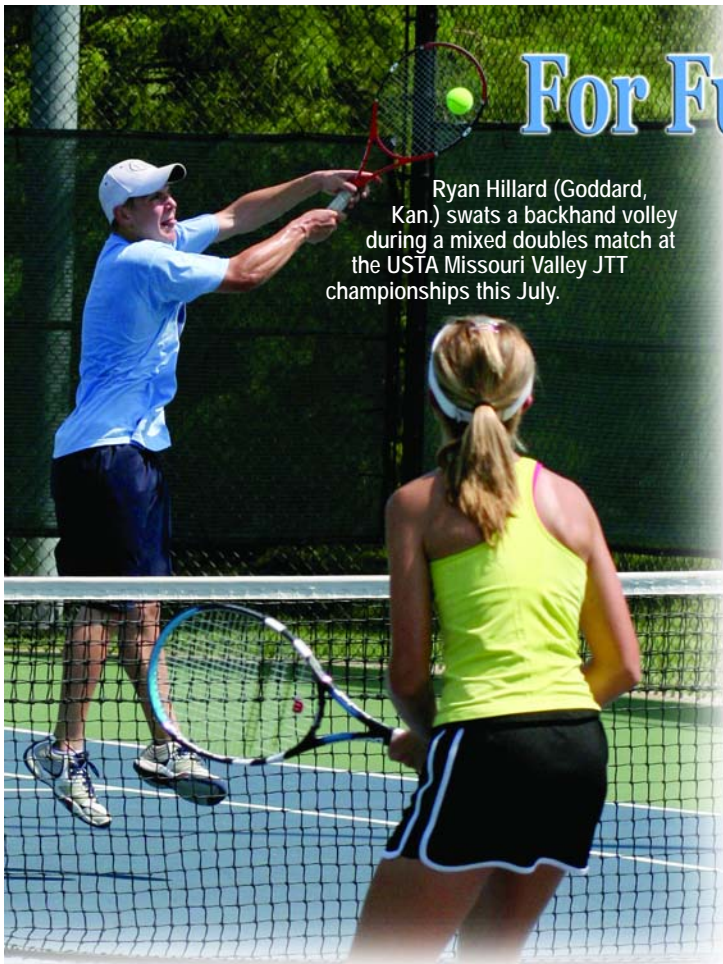
Prognosticating the future of a talented 10-year-old player is a pure guessing game. The odds of making it to the same level of a Serena Williams or Maria Sharapova are Powerball-long.

But don't count out Liz. Persistence and determination — hers and her father's — have helped her go so far so young, already beating the odds on a remarkable journey between two years old and 10.



**Liz and her father
Nassaïre Nkamgouo**

For Fun, Fitness & Friends



Ryan Hillard (Goddard, Kan.) swats a backhand volley during a mixed doubles match at the USTA Missouri Valley JTT championships this July.

Team program helps juniors find their game

Not every child playing tennis is a prodigy or budding superstar, but that shouldn't hinder interested kids from developing a love for tennis and finding their way to the court as often as they possibly can.

The USTA Junior Team Tennis (JTT) program bridges the gap between the super competitive and beginners, helping young players age 6-18 get their fill of team competition, fun and fitness all in one setting.

In USTA Missouri Valley alone, there are nearly 1,200 JTT participants taking advantage of all the program offers. The whole JTT philosophy is one that eases children into the competitive ranks, while keeping the team atmosphere light and fun as children build their tennis skills. Needing just eight players total to play (four boys and four girls), having a lot of players to form a team isn't necessary. Smaller communities to compete on a level playing field with bigger ones.

There are also differing levels for intermediate and advanced players, giving newcomers the chance to take part in the sport as well as giving the more competitive players a chance to further their racquet skills.

"Team tennis has a lot to offer young kids," said Scott Sisson, of Winfield, Kan., a JTT coach for the last 15 years. "It gets them outside, teaches them a skill, and keeps them healthy and active. But I think the thing the kids enjoy most (with JTT) is they still get to be with their friends and can compete along-

side them. At the end of many of these summers, I've had kids come up to me and say, 'Coach, I think I've found my sport.'"

A BOOST FOR SCHOOL TEAMS With a co-ed format that includes mixed doubles alongside the traditional gender singles and doubles matches, JTT allows young boys and girls the opportunity to compete with each other as both teammates and competitors, something most sports don't offer. The program also adds a lot to children's tennis development by giving them a low-cost alternative to play, instead of more expensive private lesson and summer tennis camp options.

Coaches also enjoy the program, since the bulk of the JTT season takes place in the summer, when school is out and students are possibly less likely to be doing several other things besides tennis. The JTT program keeps young players hitting tennis balls and in shape, better preparing players for middle school and high school tennis seasons in the fall. During the summer months when coaches can't always assist the young charges already on their teams, it also helps coaches identify fresh talent in their area, creating a pipeline for new players to join high school teams in the future.

"(JTT) has elevated the boys and girls high school teams in our area tremendously," said Ken Brown, a JTT coach from Independence, Kan. "I think it's a win-win situation all around, especially for those kids who aren't at the top of the competitive chain, since JTT allows them to experience competitive tennis."

Brown, who is also the coach of his high school team in Independence, credits JTT with developing a tight-knit team spirit and camaraderie, since nearly all of his JTT kids played on the high school team as well. Brown's Independence boys team captured the 4A state team title this past spring, an accomplishment Brown says was a direct result of the JTT season: "I think a lot of our success at the high school level is a direct result of having a strong JTT program in our area."

LIFE LESSONS Coaches and kids also see other benefits to participating in JTT, such as learning sportsmanship and how to be a good team member.

"JTT allows kids to mix it up, and gives them an opportunity to have some success," says Shonne Webb-Bey, the Iowa Eastern Area Local JTT Coordinator. "Success can come in many ways, of course on the court, but also in terms of growing as a person, learning to be a good sport, and having fun with your peers. Junior players need all of those things more than anyone, since so many of them are still just learning so many new things, tennis included."

Webb-Bey said many of his older JTT kids have served as mentors to the younger players in his program, something he was especially proud of. He also cited the fact that several of his participants are youngsters from inner cities and other at-risk youths.

"Without JTT, some of our players would probably never have met any of these other kids, kids that come from different backgrounds and environments," Webb-Bey said. "(JTT) has given them a chance to make a new friend and a tennis buddy."

NEW WEB SITE LAUNCHED

If you've visited the USTA Missouri Valley Web site recently, you have probably noticed a whole new look to missourivalley.usta.com.

The site has been redesigned with you in mind!

The new navigation was created to make information easier to locate with more, yet simpler menu options to select from. Plus, through the "It's Your Game" link, you can now go to missourivalley.usta.com to find a partner, find a court and find a program!

Futhermore, the site has strong visual punch than ever before with larger photos and now some animated graphic elements.

Make missourivalley.usta.com your source for tennis news in the section.

Read current news from your local community or around the nation, find a tournament or League to play in, link through to your own district's Web site, find out how to get involved in your community's tennis programs, find contact information for your district and section staff, and learn about volunteer opportunities and much more.

For exciting new photo galleries from recent tournaments like USTA Leagues and updates on events such the USTA Missouri Valley Annual Conference (see page 2), go to the net at the new missourivalley.usta.com.



'I Do' CHAMPS
Dustin and Carolina Perry share a kiss after an early-round victory in the USTA National Husband and Wife Hard Court Championships, which the Missouri Valley hosted in Kansas City July 21-23. The Perrys, who live in Kansas City, kept the national title in the Missouri Valley, defeating another KC-area couple, Mel and Marissa Brown, in the final 6-2, 7-6 (4). The tournament featured 26 couples from across the country. The Perrys are both former college players — Dustin at North Carolina State and Carolina at the University of Kentucky, where she twice earned All-American honors. The Perrys' "courtship" began when they met while attending the 2003 US Open.

TENNIS ON CAMPUS

Members of an Iowa State University Tennis On Campus team huddle up before a match last winter. With school back in session, now is the perfect time to get into the swing of this co-ed program on the campus you're attending. If your university or college hasn't got a program, take the lead and start Tennis On Campus on your campus. Contact USTA Missouri Valley Program Manager Sue Riemann at riemann@movalley.usta.com or **314-821-5630** for more information. Tennis On Campus is a great way to make new friends, enjoy a game you can still be playing 50 years from now, and compete for a championship or just for fun — either way you'll have a ball!



Members of the St. Louis 3.5 women's team share a joyful hug after clinching the USTA Missouri Valley League Section championship.

CONGRATULATIONS LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

The USTA Missouri Valley concluded its 2006 Section League Championships with the Super Seniors competition in Oklahoma City Sept. 15-17.

Congratulations to these section champs advancing to the National Championships.

For locations and dates of the National Championships visit the USTA League Tennis section of the Missouri Valley Web site, missourivalley.usta.com. If you haven't gotten in on the fun of USTA League tennis, contact the coordinator in your area. The coordinators are also listed at missourivalley.usta.com.



ADULT WOMEN

District	City	Captain
2.5 Oklahoma	Tulsa, Okla.	Hope Heidmar
3.0 H. of America	Kansas City, Mo.	Kim McDuffie
3.5 St. Louis	St. Louis	Kristin Ostanek
4.0 Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	Judy Fitzpatrick
4.5 Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	Janet Pumphrey
5.0 Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	Laura Grooms

ADULT MEN

District	City	Captain
2.5 St. Louis	St. Louis	Bobby Rosenberger
3.0 Oklahoma	Tulsa, Okla.	Rick Dodson
3.5 Oklahoma	Tulsa, Okla.	Larry Thompson
4.0 H. of America	Kansas City, Mo.	Jeff Dolinar
4.5 Nebraska	Omaha, Neb.	Robert Weber
5.0 Oklahoma	Oklahoma City	Russell Warner

MIXED DOUBLES

District	City	Captain
6.0 Nebraska	Omaha, Neb.	Carvie Erwin
7.0 Kansas	Wichita, Kan.	Robert Mansfield
8.0 Oklahoma	Tulsa, Oklahoma	Scott Denne
9.0 Iowa	Cedar Rapids, Iowa	B.J. Fleming

SUPER SENIOR WOMEN

District	City	Captain
6.0 Iowa	Iowa City	Ann Ridenour
7.0 Nebraska	Omaha, Neb.	Martha Weiss
8.0 Oklahoma	Tulsa, Okla.	Janice Roberts

SUPER SENIOR MEN

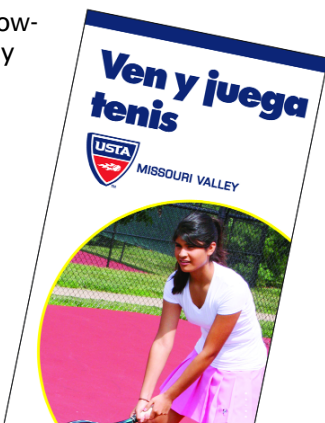
District	City	Captain
6.0 H. of America	Overland Park, Kan.	Stan Bennett
7.0 St. Louis	St. Louis	Ron Butler
8.0 Nebraska	Omaha, Neb.	Jerome Sherman

SPANISH LANGUAGE RESOURCES

Don't let language be a barrier to growing the game. The USTA Missouri Valley has a number of resources available in Spanish.

Visit missourivalley.usta.com to download the brochure shown here.

Other materials include the Spanish translation of tennis terms, a brochure highlighting the many accomplishments of Latin players, and much more. For more information contact Diveristy Manager Fred Johnson at tenislatino@movalley.usta.com.



FINAL BLOCK PARTY OF 2006

If you're in the St. Louis area the first weekend of October, be prepared to party.

The final Tennis Block Party to be held in the USTA Missouri Valley this year is scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 7, at Heman Park in University City, Mo., a St. Louis suburb.

It's never too early to start planning Tennis Block Parties for 2007, with a special emphasis on holding a party in your community during Tennis Month, May. The parties feature on-court drills, entertainments, prizes and more. The objective is to get new people excited about playing tennis.

Oct. 3
Des Moines, Iowa
Iowa Tennis Summit
Des Moines Park & Rec. Dept.

Oct. 4
Atlantic, Iowa
Iowa Tennis Summit
Atlantic Golf and Country Club

Oct. 5-6
Kansas City, Mo.
Kansas City Marathon
Health & Fitness Expo

Oct. 6-8
Kansas City, Mo.
USTA Missouri Valley NTRP
& Open Outdoor Championships
Plaza Tennis Center

Oct. 7
Jefferson City, Mo.
Multicultural Festival

Oct. 7
University City, Mo.
Tennis Block Party (Heman Park)

Oct. 11
Clinton, Iowa
Iowa Tennis Summit
Erickson Center

Oct. 27-29
St. Joseph, Kansas City
& Joplin, Mo.
Wichita & Topeka, Kan.
Tulsa, Okla. & Des Moines Iowa
Indoor OctoberFutures

Nov. 3-5
Des Moines, Iowa
St. Joseph, Kansas City
& Joplin, Mo.
Wichita & Topeka, Kan.
Segment 3 Super

Nov. 3-4
Oklahoma City
USPTA Coaches Workshop

Nov. 5
Omaha, Neb.
Nebraska Tennis Association
Hall of Fame Banquet
D.C. Centre

Nov. 10-12
Wichita, Kan.
Segment 3 Super

Nov. 17-19
St. Joseph, Kansas City
& St. Louis, Mo.
Wichita, Kan. & Tulsa, Okla.
Segment 3 Sweet 16

Nov. 23-27
St. Louis
National Open Boys & Girls 18's
Sunset Tennis Center

Nov. 24-26
St. Louis
USTA Missouri Valley NTRP
& Open Indoor Championships
Creve Ceour Racquet Club

Dec. 1-3
Joplin & Kansas City, Mo.
Wichita & Topeka, Kan.
Indoor December Futures

Dec. 8-10
Overland Park, Kan.
USTA Missouri Valley
Annual Conference
Sheraton Overland Park Hotel

Dec. 8
Overland Park, Kan.
USTA Missouri Valley
High School & Junior High
Coaches Clinic
Indian Creek Racquet Club

Dec. 9
Overland Park, Kan.
USTA Missouri Valley
2006 Awards & Hall of Fame
Induction Luncheon
Sheraton Overland Park Hotel

Dec. 15-17
Kansas City, Mo.
Indoor December Futures