**USTA Nevada scored $50,000 grant keep children's programs in play (Continued)…**

The grant’s focus is to involve children 3 to 10 in the sport over a three-year period. The first year infuses $25,000 into USTA-Nevada’s coffers. The second year brings $15,000, and the third, $10,000. USTA expects the recipient to match those figures. Wolfington said that was not a problem.

“Our local USTA office has spent six years really fine-tuning our financial position, finding creative ways to bring in new revenue,” Wolfington said. “As a result, we’ve been able to save money … and now we’re going to use that money to match this grant.”

The money could have been used to build more tennis courts, some child-size, which are 36 feet long versus the regulation 78 feet. But building courts can be costly, so instead, USTA-Nevada is partnering with about 12 existing facilities, mostly country clubs, to use their courts. Regulation-size courts can easily be striped to mark new boundaries.

The Darling Tennis Center, 7901 W. Washington Ave., already has courts with resized lines for children. Wolfington said USTA-Nevada is working with other clubs to do the same.

“The grant will help facilitate that, so those clubs don’t have to incur the cost,” he said.

USTA-Nevada also holds free tennis classes for children 3 to 10 at Tivoli Village, 440 S. Rampart Blvd., during the Saturdayfarmers market and on Sundays.

Roughly 15 to 20 percent of the grant will go toward buying child-sized tennis rackets, Wolfington said. Having the right size equipment is vital to keeping children engaged. With shorter, lighter rackets, slow-bouncing balls and simplified scoring, children learn to play quickly and easily while having more fun in the process, he said.

How will this initiative affect the growth of the sport?

“It’s like a snowball effect. Once you get one child involved, the brothers and sisters get going,” said Crombie Hatfield, director of tennis at Canyon Gate Country Club, 2001 Canyon Gate Drive. “… The wives start playing league, then the husbands get involved, and (soon) they’re all playing.”

Across the country, tennis is growing, even thriving. A 2012 study by the independent Taylor Research Group found that tennis participation in the U.S. was at its highest levels in three years, and that the biggest increase, at 13 percent, was among children 6 to 11.

About 7,000 people play league tennis in Las Vegas through USTA-Nevada. For those 10 or younger, there are roughly 800 junior members.

“By providing a foundation for kids to play tennis, we can make a lasting impact in communities throughout the country,” said Kurt Kamperman, USTA chief executive, community tennis. “We are thrilled to have the opportunity to … encourage healthy and active lifestyles for area kids by introducing them to tennis.”

USTA-Nevada plans to work with community partners, such as schools, businesses and organizations, to offer free classes, after-school programs and other youth programs to drive participation.

“All someone has to do is call and get free classes,” Wolfington said. “The idea is to try all the clubs, try different instructors, all the different styles, and it’s free.”

Some locations will be one time only, while others allow multiple free visits.

USTA-Nevada is looking for organizations and companies to sign up so their associates’/employees’ children can play free. Schools are also welcome.

To learn more, visit [youthtennis.com](http://youthtennis.com/) or call [702-792-8384](tel:702-792-8384).

It’s not just youngsters who get to have fun. Plans are for USTA-Nevada’s free tennis campaign to be extended to adults this year, thanks to the sponsorship from the Hilton Lake Las Vegas, CBS, the World Journal Chinese Daily News and Tivoli Village.

For more information, visit [ustanevada.com](http://ustanevada.com/).