

Reading Recreation Commission serves up tennis and more Friday night - See more at: <http://readingeagle.com/news/article/reading-recreation-commission-serves-up-tennis-and-more-friday-night#sthash.bNbsp55w.dpuf>

Reading Recreation Commission serves up tennis and more Friday night

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By **Don Spatz**

The Reading Recreation Commission's summer tennis program offered a fun Friday night for participants and their families at the Hampden Park tennis courts.



Reading Eagle: Jeremy Drey | Monica Lopez, 7, takes her turn during a drill Friday evening at Hampden Park, where the Reading Recreation Commission's summer tennis program sponsored a special event for children participants and their families.



Reading Eagle: Jeremy Drey | Children grab their rackets Friday evening at Hampden Park, where the Reading Recreation Commission sponsored a special event for children in its summer tennis program and their families.

Well over 100 attended the "Family Friday Night Lights" event. It featured free food, including covered dishes from many ethnic groups and Rita's Water Ice, as well as music, games and, of course, tennis for every age and skill level.

"It's for fun," tennis director Larry Zerbe said of the second of three events during the eight-week summer program. "We don't teach tennis; we

teach kids."

He said the commission's tennis programs have three priorities, the most important of which is to give the kids an environment in which they can have fun with other kids from around the city.

Second is to have fun and build relationships with the program staff, and third is to have fun with the sport of tennis.

"Our program is like the porch to go into the house of tennis," he said.

Eli Rodriguez, 10, picked up some knowledge watching a match between high school students who are serving as coaches for the program.

"I've learned to rally and backhand," he said. "I really liked the games we played, especially overhead which is like king of the court."

Also featured Friday was the competition team that will take on Allentown and - if it wins, as it has the past four years - will represent Reading in the district competition in Princeton, N.J.

Last year, the team was one point away from going to the national finals.

Zerbe said the sport is good for kids because it's very active, but there's a place for every skill level. At the same time it's an individual sport that not only builds kids' self-esteem, but also gets them to understand their success is up to them, not somebody else on a team, he said.

The program has been run for decades, but seven years ago moved into local schools during the school year. That program has won numerous awards from the U.S. Tennis Association. It's sponsored by Fromuth Tennis.

Contact Don Spatz: 610-371-5027 or dspatz@readingeagle.com.



Reading Eagle: Jeremy Drey | Children get together before a tennis skills game Friday evening at Hampden Park, where the Reading Recreation Commission sponsored a special event for children in its summer tennis program and their families.



Reading Eagle: Jeremy Drey | Eli Rodriguez, 10, watches high-school-age coaches play a match Friday evening at Hampden Park, where the Reading Recreation Commission sponsored a special event for children in its summer tennis program and their families.



Reading Eagle: Jeremy Drey | Sarah Alicea, 8, takes her turn during a drill Friday evening at Hampden Park, where the Reading Recreation Commission sponsored a special event for children in its summer tennis program and their families.