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TENNIS THANKS THE TROOPS EVENTS SUPPORT MILITARY FAMILIES

by Amanda Folks, Program Manager - ThanksUSA

On tennis courts across the country, USPTA tennis professionals are uniting by honoring military families. ThanksUSA's Tennis Thanks the Troops (TTTT) program is a charitable beneficiary of events hosted at clubs and public facilities across many USPTA divisions. Featuring singles and doubles matches, along with many parent/child matchups, fun-filled competition and social time are paramount. It is the perfect way to enjoy a military holiday or special weekend with family and friends.

Founded by two young sisters Rachel and Kelsi Okun, ThanksUSA has been giving the gift of education to military families in need since 2006. Since then, the organization has awarded over 4,200 scholarships, a total of more than 13 million dollars. ThanksUSA also hosts a weekly adaptive tennis clinic in Washington, DC for disabled veterans. Taught by a wheelchair certified instructor, the clinic brings together veterans of different ages, eras and skill levels who have found a love of the game and camaraderie on the court that reflects the best of military culture.

Tennis Thanks the Troops unites the love of the game with the honor of giving back to our service members and their families. It is the perfect double play that allows tennis clubs and their members the opportunity to make a difference through a tax-deductible donation to an organization that they know and trust. As Joni Hannah, USPTA Pro at Westwood Country Club in Virginia shared following her fifth annual TTTT Memorial Day event, "My members really like the fact that 90 percent of the funds raised will actually be used by ThanksUSA to provide scholarship funding."



USPTA Missouri Valley Division hosted a Tennis Thanks the Troops event at Milburn Country Club.



USPTA's Rhett Russell, director of tennis at Orange Beach Tennis Center with his students.

This is not the first time tennis professionals and veterans have joined forces on and off the court to honor military families, and it won't be the last. Many of these USPTA sponsored events are annual community traditions. USPTA Pro Dave Brown of Florida said, "We are proud of USPTA's support for ThanksUSA and we here at Plantation Bay look forward to hosting our 5th annual fundraiser again next year!" It's a tradition that everyone can get on board with." USPTA Pro, Rhett Russell, City of Orange Beach Tennis Center in Alabama said it perfectly, "Tennis Thanks the Troops is a very special fundraiser in which we can raise funds for military family scholarships. Our men and women in uniform who put their lives on the line everyday deserve financial assistance. We want to be a 'light of hope' for some of these military families."

This light of hope is spreading nationwide with the help of tennis professionals and enthusiasts. Registering your club as a Tennis Thanks the Troops host facility is simple and rewarding. By donating a lesson, hosting a clinic, or sponsoring a tournament or Pro-Am, you are thanking our military families in a tangible way. Helen Wilson, USPTA Missouri Valley shared her reason for giving back, "It is very rewarding to use our platform as tennis professionals to provide support to our military families that sacrifice for us every day. I encourage other USPTA Pros to take two hours of your day to make a difference in the lives of our military families."

Please consider a Tennis Thanks the Troops event at your club or facility!