

Addison Community Athletics Foundation

Tennis improves concentration, raises self-esteem, and helps players break through perceived mental barriers both on and off the court. Yet, at its core, tennis is a game that's a joy to play, and participants develop foundational skills that can lead to a lifetime of fun on the court.

The Addison Community Athletics Foundation (ACAF) promotes athletic activity and wellness by supporting tennis and health education programs for youth and adults. In 2018, ACAF funded the Tiger Tennis Club, which offers 7th to 9th graders from all socio-economic backgrounds the opportunity to play tennis at no cost at Middlebury Indoor Tennis (MIT).

Tennis pros and high school mentors teach the mechanics—and the fun—of the game, but the program also develops the whole child. The Tiger Tennis Club brings in partners like Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op to teach nutritional health, and incorporates emotional wellness exercises like discussing the students' highlights and low points of the week.

"All teens struggle in some aspects of their lives, but the wonderfully uplifting thing about the Tiger Tennis Club is that it gives these young players an opportunity to feel successful," says Heather Potter, one of the tennis pros at MIT. "They can leave all the baggage elsewhere and just have fun hitting the ball."

Participant Anya Hardy-Mittell says she has always felt "unathletic" but that tennis clicked for her in a way that other sports haven't. Playing as a team of one makes it easier for Anya to get motivated because she can focus on self-improvement and doesn't feel the pressure of having other people relying on her.

"Tennis takes a lot of mental composure," says Drew Kiernan, a program mentor and high school senior. In fact, his tennis experience has helped him improve in the classroom. Instead of getting frustrated by a poor grade on a recent math test, he used the same mental composure developed on the court to boost his math skills. And he got an "A" on the next test.

ACAF has partnered with many schools and local organizations to increase access to tennis in Addison County and hopes to introduce the sport to many more in the coming years.

Promoting community health and vitality through
tennis, collaboration, and community

