

SPUD Tennis Returns To Belton

After a full 4 days of tennis in late May during the Palmetto Championships, Belton welcomed another important event June 21-22, the USTA Southern Special Populations Unified Doubles (SPUD) tournament. The tournament was hosted by the Belton Tennis Association and presented by USTA Southern and USTA South Carolina, and featured over 50 special athletes from four states (North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama). The tournament returned to Belton for the fourth straight year.



SPUD Tournament Group Photo

Each special athlete was paired with a unified partner in doubles competition. Lunch was provided both days and a dinner/dance was hosted at the First Baptist Church Friday night. The players were divided into six teams and competed against each other over a two day period. All matches were played at the Belton Tennis Center, Leda Poore Park and Belton-Honea Path High School. The tournament concluded with an awards ceremony at 1:00 on Saturday.

The Blue Team, captained by Jack Barker of Charleston, won the team competition. Team members included Hadley Berry (GA), Herman Days (GA), Drew Durden (GA), Jackie Hoch (SC), Justin Hunsucker (NC), Latrice Pringle (SC), C. W. Watson (GA) and Sarah Wright (SC). Every player received an award.



Rex Maynard (Center) with two Sportsmanship Award recipients, Michelle Godfrey of Florence and Julius Mitchell of Savannah.

The sportsmanship awards were named in honor of Belton's Rex Maynard, the tournament chairman, this year. They were presented to Michelle Godfrey of Florence and Julius Mitchell of Savannah. Jim Hamm from Atlanta, the USTA Southern Chairman for Special Populations, was the Tournament Director and said this about naming the sportsmanship awards for Maynard: "The committee was unanimous in the decision to put Rex's name on this award. We feel it is the highest honor we are able to give to an athlete and it stands for all the things that Rex brings to the many lives that he continues to touch through tennis. We like coming to Belton. The hospitality is

great, and you can sense the great tennis history and the community support for events like this. It's a unique venue. The athletes love it, and we're glad to have the opportunity to come here."

Maynard served as the Tournament Chairman and had this to say: "This has been a great tournament, and we're proud to host these players for the fourth straight year. It's a really fun event, and it's great to see these athletes perform and have fun. They have a great attitude, and there are no losers. I'm honored the tournament committee named the sportsmanship awards for me, but the credit should really go to the athletes, partners, volunteers and the committee. Belton is a great location for this, and we're proud to have these players come here to compete and have fun. It's another good example of why we're considered the Tennis Capital of South Carolina!"

The tournament is sponsored by Chick-fil-A of Anderson, the Belton Tennis Association, Palmetto Championships, Dunlop, Pepsi, Clinkscales Drugs, Palmetto Insurance/Keys Agency, Mr. and Mrs. Jim Bright, Maynard's, Southern Burglar & Fire Alarm, First Baptist Church and Chapman, Byrholdt & Yon. Local players participating included Sadie Ellen Blake, Jonathan Rice and Hack Clinkscales and local volunteers were Maynard, Patricia Henderson, Sandra Gaillard and Maxine LeCroy.