

Thanking our Troops through Tennis

Joe D'Aleo, USPTA FL Vice President



On Friday April 25th from 1 - 6 p.m. at Eglin Air Force Base, FL 15 tennis teaching professionals donated their time for Dick Stockton, the President and Executive Director of Blue Sky Foundation. Known as T-3, Thanking our Troops through Tennis, held the event in conjunction with the grand opening of the base's eight new tennis courts. We taught the adults first and when the kids got out of school we conducted 10 and under clinics using the orange ball and some of the younger children playing on the 36ft court format. The older kids came out next using the yellow ball and for the most part. For some of the participants this was their first experience on a tennis court or even holding a tennis racquet - we utilized the orange ball so they were all having fun quickly. Overall we had approximately 75 participants of family members from Eglin Air Force base ranging from adults to children 5 to 17 yrs old.

In all the years that I have been teaching tennis and all the professionals that day would agree this was one of my most memorable experiences to be able to give back and say thank you to our troops and family members for all that they have done and sacrificed for our country. Dick Stockton by far is a great ambassador to the game of tennis and this has been a dream of his and his wife

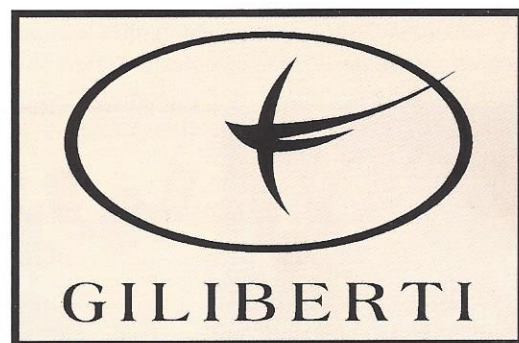
to start this venture of going to military bases across the country promoting the game of tennis to the families that serve our country. Dick Stockton a tennis legend and former Top 10 singles player in the world also had among the other tennis teaching professionals Andrea Jaeger former #2 in the world WTA, JoAnne Russell 1977 Wimbledon Doubles Champion, and Adriana Solarova former WTA professional. We also had three USPTA Master Professionals teaching among us Tommy Wade of Decatur AL, Glen Howe Tallahassee, FL and Steve Contardi Cincinnati, OH founder of Tennis Fantasies with the Legends with its upcoming 27th anniversary. It was also great to have some military veterans among us Sam Vickroy Sr, Mario Alvarez, and Chuck Straley with Kevin Dunworth and Greg Bennett working directly on Eglin Air Force Base.

The mission of the Blue Sky Foundation is to bring the game of tennis to children who may not have access to the game or the ability to pay. Qualified coaches and mentors will encourage positive youth development through varied sports programs that encourage physical fitness and offer certified educational curriculum's. Our goal is to insure that that all participants reach their full potential. Through our "Thanking Our Troops Through Tennis" (T3) program, world class tennis players bring a wealth of tennis knowledge to our servicemen, servicewomen, veterans and all their families at military installations throughout the country. The basic idea is to take the game of tennis to military bases and to offer active personnel, their families, Veterans and Wounded Warriors a fun, stress-free day of tennis clinics and other on-court games and activities.

It was a complete honor working with Dick Stockton and promoting his T-3 program at Eglin and I look forward to the next time we can share the court together at a military base or some fun doubles at TOPS'L Beach & Racquet Resort. I also want to thank all the tennis teaching professionals for donating their time and giving back for such a worthy cause.



L-R: Mario Contardi, Sam Vickroy Jr, Mario Alvarez, Sam Vickroy Sr, Steve Contardi, Joe D'Aleo, Brett Beattie, Chuck Straley, JoAnne Russell, Glen Howe, Tommy Wade, Dick Stockton, Adriana Solarova, Kevin Dunworth, Greg Bennett, and Andrea Jaeger.



Joe D'Aleo and Adriana Solarova with Tennis Legends Dick Stockton and Andrea Jaeger playing some doubles at TOPS'L before the Eglin Event

