

Renovated Gates Tennis Center Gears Up For Spectacular September

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Built in the 1970s, the Gates Tennis Center was paid for and given to the citizens of Denver by the late Charles C. Gates Jr. (who owned *Gates Rubber Company* at the time). Wanting to ensure its long-term sustainability, Gates expressly demanded that the Center not be managed by the *Denver Parks and Recreation Department* but that the management be chosen by *The Park People*, a non-profit organization which included many of Denver's most prominent citizens. His hope was to see the center managed in a way that did not depend heavily upon the resources or input of the City and County of Denver and over the last 30 years, the center has operated that way.

Necessary Renovations

According to its Web site, "Throughout its history, Gates Tennis Center has fulfilled its important mission of providing a broad array of programming while remaining financially sustainable. But time has taken a toll on this prized facility and the recent rise in tennis programming required that critical improvements be made."

Beginning in 2004, The Park People began working closely with the *Gates Family Foundation* and with support from the City of Denver, the campaign to undergo a multi-million dollar renovation and enhancement of the facility was started.

The renovation was completed and the upgrades by all accounts have made the Gates Tennis Center one of, if not the, premier tennis facility in the Rocky Mountain region.

Thanks to the completion of the \$4.8 million renovation funded by the Gates Family Foundation, the City of Denver and the *United States Tennis Association*, the Gates Center received the USTA's *Outstanding Public Facility of the Year Award* in 2008 noting that Gates had continued to succeed in "providing the absolute highest quality public facility for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds."



Something For Everyone: With 20 tennis courts available, programs for all ages, free tennis clinics every third Saturday, and a pro shop with affordable prices, Eric Rose and Sam Hitman say that Gates takes its public mission very seriously.

Something For Everyone

In addition to the renovations, ensuring Gates' success are Rose and Hitman who were tennis pros at Gates in the 1990s and returned four years ago to manage the facility. Since then they have been so successful that according to Hitman, the courts are packed every day from open to close.

"We tried to think of every type of person when coming up with our various programs because we wanted this facility to have something for everyone," said Hitman. "We also have a great staff that includes tennis pros from around the world."

The Gates programs include *Adult Classes*, *Social Mixers*, *Beginner Round Robins* and *"Late Night" Doubles*, among many others. There are also programs for kids including *Pee Wee Classes* (ages 4-7), *Junior Strokes* (ages 4-18) and the *Denver Tennis League* (practices and matches for juniors ages 8 to

18) and many more.

In addition to all the adult and junior programs, the *Gates "Tennis For Kids" Outreach Program* (which was created by CTM) provides tennis for anyone with a desire to play. Scholarships are available to children ages four to 18 for lessons, league play and equipment, and are available to all juniors that meet the criteria set forth within the application.

"We want our outreach kids to have great sportsmanship, hustle and teamwork," noted Rose. "It is our privilege to give back and see the smiles on these kids' faces."

The "Tennis For Kids" Outreach Committee meets on a monthly basis to review scholarships and anyone is welcome to apply. The "Tennis For Kids" Outreach program has over 50 kids participating in a variety of programs at Gates. Hitman says the program has been doing so well that they have had to hire someone to help manage it.

Pro Shop Amenities

When those playing at Gates need equipment or any kind of service, there is a complete pro shop that offers a full line of rackets and accessories. The pro shop features "prices for the public," meaning that their prices are 20 percent below Internet costs. The shop also offers a professional 24 hour string and grip service along with any other tennis apparel needed.

"Our pro shop has the convenience and feel of a country club without the membership and high prices," noted Hitman.

For those who want to learn more about tennis, Gates offers a free clinic every third Saturday. The clinic is for ages 15 and up and all levels are welcome. Participants can bring their own racket or rent a demo. Since there are limited spots available and there is limited space, Rose and Hitman recommend reserving a spot early. Clinic dates for the rest of the summer are July 4 and 25, August 15 and September 5 and 26.

"Our main goal is to fill our courts and get everyone playing tennis," said Rose. "Sam and I feel very lucky to be here and are proud to be part of a public tennis center that is helping to grow the game."

Colorado State Open Slated For September

Now that the facility itself has been renovated, as part of the Center's mission to grow the game of tennis, Gates is planning to help reinvigorate the *Colorado State Open*, one of the country's oldest and, at one time most prestigious, tennis tournaments.

The tournament began in 1886 and at one time attracted the top players in the world with winners including Grand Slam Hall of Fame players such as Don Budge, Bobby Riggs, Jack Kramer and Althea Gibson. While the 2009 version of the Colorado Open will not be bringing in the top world class players, the prize money has been doubled and the top players in the Rocky Mountain region and aspiring players from across the country are expected to be playing.

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Gates Tennis Center

USTA National Public Facility of the Year

Open to the Public

LEARN TENNIS THIS SUMMER

Adult Classes

Fun 4 Week Program

Junior Classes

Ages 4 to 18

FREE Tennis Clinic

Every 3rd Saturday

"Tennis for Kids"

Scholarships Available



303.355.4461

www.gatestenniscenter.info

Operated by Colorado Tennis Management, Inc. for The Park People and the City of Denver.

