

Over the summer I was selected and had the opportunity to intern for Tennis Central's Leadership Team and volunteered at tennis ACES (After-School Community Enrichment Strategy) . This program allows inner city kids and less fortunate kids to stay active over the summer. We taught kids ages 5-11 from 9-10:30, kids 12-15 10:30-12, and kids k-8th grade who were participating in a summer school program every day. I got to know these kids personally and developed amazing relationships with these kids. I got to hear their stories and interests, while teaching them to play the sport that I love throughout the weeks. I had an amazing experience this summer and I hope all of the kids pursue tennis and understand the value of education for the rest of their lives.

During my first week interning for the leadership program through ACES, the theme of the week was caring and citizenship. Other than teaching the kids caring and citizenship through tennis, we also helped them create care packages and write thank you letters to send to local soldiers serving overseas. We wanted the kids to see that these soldiers are in need of the most basic items and that they should be thankful for all that they have. They got together in groups and made lists of everything they wanted to thank the soldier for. Every week we also invited a guest speaker to come and one week was a local retired soldier who started writing children's books and giving them to families who had parents overseas. He told the kids about his life when he was in the military, his motivation to start his book writing idea, and even read the kids one of his stories. We combined his visit with a book swap where every kids brought a book and swapped with another kid. Another thing we had the kids do every week was write an essay.

During my second week interning, the lesson of the week was sportsmanship and respect for others. We did drills with the kids that involved them working with other kids and joining up as a team to help each other. Our guest speaker for that week was Lastings Milledge, a former professional baseball player for the New York Mets, Washington Nationals, and the Pittsburg Pirates. He now plays locally for the Lancaster Barnstormers. He talked to the kids about his professional career, playing on many teams with many different players and coaches, the travel, and most importantly, why he chose to go professional instead of going to college. Lastings told the kids what it takes to get to the very top and motivated them to keep up their hard work and to definitely keep their education as their number one priority. Lastings then played tennis with the kids, signed autographs, and even gave the kids tickets to a Barnstormers game where the kids got to run the bases before the game. They showed a video from Lastings visit (that the counselors created), on the big screen which the kids loved. It's hard to keep a bunch of young kids out in the hot July sun playing tennis for an hour and a half straight, so one activity we did to help them work together and work on problem solving was we had them solve rubics cubes. One of my fellow volunteers was able to solve a rubics cube in under 30 seconds so she gave the kids tips and tricks on how to solve rubics cubes. Although not many of

the kids solved the rubics cube, it was very fun to watch them support each other and work together to figure it out.

During my third and fourth week, the lesson of the week was combined health and fitness. We were teaching them that even at their young ages of 5-14, their health is their responsibility. A big lesson was that when it comes to your body and your health, no one can motivate you more than yourself. Both weeks we had workers from St. Joseph's Children Hospital come and talk to them about topics such as emotions, eating, and exercising, and how all those things work together to keep you healthy and happy. The kids gave examples of different activities they could do with all kinds of emotions. They got bubbles to work on taking deep breaths, had toys to demonstrate how you breathe when you're exercising and how that's similar to when you're angry and how to control that. They practiced all these exercises while they were playing tennis and games. They were also taught that not all healthy food is gross and were given different snacks that were both healthy for you and tasted good! It was great to see the kids enjoy learning about health and watching them apply it and notice what they were doing!