

TENNIS

Developing tennis at a youth level

By Geoff Smith

Janet Warner, a gym teacher in the Lee school district, posed one question. “How do you teach 40 kids tennis in a gym?”

That question was the Jeopardy-style answer to why a host of gym teachers from throughout the Berkshires, along with a handful of high school and youth players, met at Lee Elementary School last Friday.

In an event hosted by the United States Tennis As



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Nikita Zaharov gives instructions during a lesson.

Continued on C2

Learning to teach tennis

Continued from C1

sociation and put on by the Lee school district, members of the Berkshire County tennis community learned how to teach tennis to kids at a young age, and in spaces that you would not normally associate tennis with.

The program is part of an educational effort by the USTA to try and train the next generation of tennis athletes. One of the biggest questions that faces youth tennis set-ups is the concept of space, and how you can teach a sport like tennis without the usual courts.

So inside of the gymnasium at the elementary school, participants learned about different activities and games that can be played inside of a

gym that teach tennis basics.

With instructors from Monument Mountain, Mt. Everett, Lenox, St. Mary's, McCann, the Richmond school district, the North Adams school district, and several other schools present, the three-hour workshop provided educators with a new way to look at youth tennis.

The Lee Community Tennis Association was also represented at the event, with a handful of instructors on hand to learn more coaching methods.

As the premier youth tennis set-up in the area, the Lee CTA is one of the groups that hopes to benefit from what the workshop provided to instructors. As Janet Warren put it, the idea is that kids will go home from school telling their

parents that they played tennis, and hopefully that gets kids out onto the tennis courts for the more instruction.

The event was ran by Josh Kosteck and Nikita Zaharov, both community relations managers for the USTA New England.

Kosteck said that he does about six of these seminars in a year. Kosteck is the USTA representative for Western Massachusetts and Vermont.

The event also classifies as a professional learning network event, a part of the Race to the Top program for helping develop curriculum with teachers.

To learn more about the Lee CTA, and to find more information on youth tennis in the County, visit www.leecta.com