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Local Youth Attend US Open Tennis Tournament

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Thanks to a partnership with HOLLA! and One Love Tennis in Wilmington three local youth experienced the excitement of attending the 2018 US Open Tennis Tournament in Flushing, New York. Taliyah Sharp, Ja'Kyri Hixson and Za'Kiyah Hixson were the fortunate local students selected to take the trip. Taliyah is an Early College student, while Ja'Kyri and Za'Kiyah are Anson Middle School students.

As part of The One Love Tennis Program, they were featured on "Backyard" Court #17 on Opening Day of the US Open just before the first match of the tournament between Jack Sock (USA) and Guido Andreozzi (ARG). Sock won the match.

"Our Activities Director Alex Gaddy has invested several years of time and effort into this tennis program and we are beginning to reap major dividends," said Leon Gatewood, CEO of HOLLA! Gatewood accompanied the students on the trip of about 30 total students.

The HOLLA! tennis program is a member of the United States Tennis Association (USTA). "Through this tennis program, our kids are getting exposure to college campuses, professional tennis players, frequent physical activity, travel and opportunities for scholarships," said Gaddy. "This is a recipe for successful students," he added. The team travels to the Family Circle Cup in Charleston, SC annually. They also frequent the American Tennis Association Tournament in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and other tournaments throughout the year.

'I believe in encouraging my children to take advantage of all of their once in a lifetime opportunities, especially those designed to better themselves," Falecha Hixson, the mother of the Anson County students attending the trip.

Gatewood said it was definitely a once in a lifetime trip for him. He stated that to see local youth interacting with professional players and other youth from all over the world, while taking selfies with people like Madison Keyes was motivation enough for him to stay focused and keep working to find funding to support The HOLLA!

Gatewood, who was on Bowman High School's first tennis team, credits that experience for his insistence that The HOLLA! Center had tennis courts and a tennis program. "There is a lot of opportunity in tennis and we intend to expose our youth to every bit of it," he said.

HOLLA! (Helping Our Loved ones Learn and Achieve) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization located at 229 East Main Street in Morven. The organization was founded in 2005 to address low achievement. It offers mentoring, tutoring and other resources to motivate youth to succeed. HOLLA! is funded, in part, by the United Way of the Central Carolinas.

For more information on the program and ways to support it, you can visit the organization's website at www.HOLLA.ws or Facebook. You can also mail contributions to HOLLA! P.O. Box 88 Wadesboro, NC 28170.



Ja'Kyri Hixson, Za'Kiyah Hixson and Taliyah Sharp take a break from the action at The US Open



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