



## Vic Braden, *Long Time Coto Resident*

Vic Braden and students in the Junior Tennis Ambassadors program

International award-winning tennis player and coach Vic Braden, co-founder of the Coto Sports Research Center, is one of the most respected tennis coaches in the world who has trained legendary tennis players such as Tracy Austin. Living in a trailer in 1974 while their Coto home was built, Braden and his wife, Melody, were the first residents of Coto de Caza. Braden is now on a quest to help shape the lives of children by teaching them the benefits of playing and coaching tennis through the Coto de Caza-based Junior Tennis Ambassadors (JTA). Since 2009, Braden has been quietly transforming the lives of Orange County youth directly from the courts of Santa Ana's Cabrillo Tennis Center. Some children are underprivileged and appreciate the generous mentoring, while others join to learn from Braden's vast knowledge of the game. Through JTA, Braden teaches the skills necessary to not only play the game but coach and mentor other kids as well.

With the blessing of Santa Ana Mayor Miguel Pulido, Braden and his team of coaches put into play a free program where elementary, junior high and high school students experience the physical and mental challenges of tennis. The main goal of the program is to encourage students to expand their leadership skills and learn to coach their classmates. To date, hundreds of children have been impacted throughout Orange County.

Braden, a coach and a former school psychologist, brings to the program a background in world class tennis instruction and years of psychology training, that mixes pure fun with the fundamentals of tennis. The real-world application of the drills are mixed with math, physics, science and every day decision making skills that develop winners on and off the court. In addition to being a licensed psychologist, sports educator and researcher, Braden has co-authored more than six books and continues to be a major player in the tennis and science communities in Coto de Caza. Braden says that he loves the beauty of Coto de Caza and the surrounding mountains.

"My vision was to create a non-profit program where students that don't normally have access to tennis become involved by playing the game, then grow to become teachers of other students," said Braden. "They exercise, learn life and court skills and generally have a great time. The biggest benefit is that each student that becomes involved adopts a new and positive energy for learning."

To date, the non-profit program has reached into the community and gained the attention and participation of many schools. An example is the Orange County High School of Arts (OCHSA) where Braden's JTA not only fulfills a P.E. requirement gap, but builds leaders by teaching those in the program to coach and mentor fellow students. Currently, about 130 OCHSA students are transported weekly by a JTA bus to the Cabrillo Tennis Courts to participate in the program.

The Junior Tennis Ambassadors program is still in its infancy. Under the leadership of Braden, it has attracted interest throughout the US and globally. The potential exists for it to become a training and coaching model for emulation throughout the country. The Orange County program has earned the support and funding of well-known business leaders and foundations such as Ronald M. Simon, Henry T. Nicolas Foundation and the Samueli Foundation, as well as other like-minded organizations that maintain a commitment to empowering tomorrow's leaders through education. Additional funding is needed to help the program thrive and expand where it is most needed.

### Junior Tennis Ambassadors:

The Junior Tennis Ambassadors is a non-profit program that teaches students to coach other students in their school at no cost. Research shows that students possess amazing abilities as athletic coaches, when properly trained. The Junior Tennis Ambassadors program also provides free instruction for adult volunteers who supervise young school-aged tennis coaches. The young tennis coaches receive free instruction that qualifies them as permanent tennis coaches for classmates throughout the school year. In addition, students of the program have gone on to earn Division I tennis scholarships and one day may become professional players. For more information please visit <http://www.juniortennisambassadors.com/>.

