

"There are a ton of fiction books for kids out there already for hockey, baseball and the other sports, but there isn't much about tennis," she said. "So I came up with some fiction books for tennis, illustrated the books myself, which I didn't know I could do."

"Basically it started out as a little booklet handout for the kids and parents and it just evolved into a book."

Egart hopes the book will help jump start the role tennis moms and dads take in their children's tennis.

"Parents tend to shy away from teaching their kids to play tennis because they don't feel comfortable on the courts themselves," she said. "We don't see tennis parents like soccer moms or hockey moms and we need to change that."

"Let's Play Tennis!" offers a solid challenge for both kids and parents at the beginning of the book in the form of a letter from Andy Ace:

"Your goal is to beat your parents by the time you are 12 years old. Your parents will spend the rest of their lives trying to beat you. Don't ever let them win. They will know!"

The initial booklet was highly received, that members of the United States Tennis Association's Northern Section caught wind of it and encouraged Egart to turn it into a kids book. She did and received the association's blessing at the same time by endorsing it with its logo on the back cover.

The book, published in April and distributed locally through Amber Skye Publishing in Eagan, distributed through a company in St. Louis Park and printed in Brainerd, has yet to be released to area bookstores, but it can be found through amazon.com, borders.com, barnesandnoble.com or Egart's own website andyacetennis.com.

Egart, who has learned a lot about the publishing business and how to market a

self-published work — selling 4,000 copies through July — still says her ultimate goal is to have parents walk into their local bookstores to purchase the book. One way or another, Egart's goal is to reach the million copy sold mark and considering there are about 30 million tennis players in the country that appears to be a possibility. But she says the focus is on attracting the non-tennis players as ultimate purchasers of "Let's Play Tennis!" for their families.

The book and its goal of assisting fami-

lies learn about tennis is another tool that Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association can use in enhancing its local tennis program. This definitely would bring Egart full circle.

The USTA's QuickStart program, which used the Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association as the pilot program in 2007, actually helped set the foundation in Egart's mind for her book. For Egart, the idea of putting something down in a booklet, then book form, came after a week's QuickStart training session in New York.

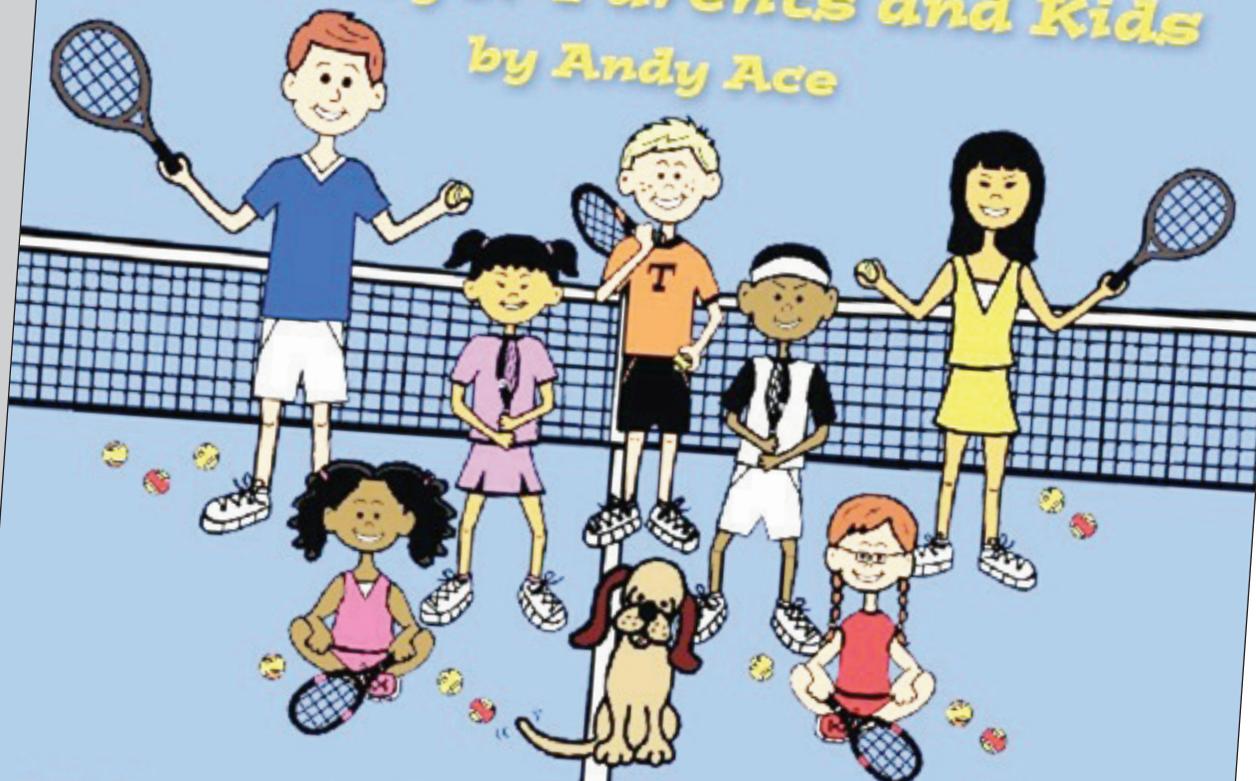
"The key thing is that we modified tennis to be age- and size-appropriate," she said, comparing it to a youth baseball program. She said baseball instructors would not send a t-ball kid to learn the game at Target Field.

"What we know is that it's more exciting for kids to rally back and forth instead of a coach hitting you a ball," she added. "It [has] really helped the kids want to stay together in the program."

LET'S PLAY TENNIS!

A Guide for Parents and Kids

by Andy Ace



Written and Illustrated by Patricia Egart