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Application for Naming a Public Facility or Property

Please follow the instructions below when submitting an application for naming a facility or property.

1. Complete the application by providing detailed information about the proposed facility or park name. Please include supplemental information such as articles, letters of support and signature list with the application.
2. Send all submittals to: Austin Parks and Recreation Department, Attn: April Thedford, 919 W. 28 ½ Street, Austin, TX 78705
3. Questions may be directed to April Thedford via email: april.thedford@austintexas.gov or by phone: (512) 974-9408

Current Name of Facility or Property: AUSTIN TENNIS CENTER

Proposed Name for the Facility or Property: SARAH PERNELL TENNIS CENTER

If proposing the name of an individual, include a biographical description of nominee:

SEE ATTACHED

Describe the individual's involvement in the Austin community:

SEE ATTACHED

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Describe the individual's connection to the facility or property, if any:

SEE ATTACHED

If proposing a name other than individual, summarize the reason for the name:

N/A

Name of requester: ROBIN MOTEN

Phone Number: 512.653.6566

Sarah Pernell

The visionary Sarah Pernell was born in Alabama during a time when racial, social, and economic distinctions were the norm. Her early childhood in the latter 50s and early 60s was marred by racial violence, racial hatred, and social unrest.

In her hometown of Attalla, Ala., her family struggled to make ends meet. Both her mother and father struggled to work and maintain a semblance of life and nourishment for her and her three brothers and sisters. In an effort to better the family, she moved to Marion, Ala., the home of Coretta Scott King.

“I was young, but still remember the day I first met Mrs. King,” said Pernell. “I remember the day in Selma – a day called “Bloody Sunday. Life was hard, but I thank every day that I was given the opportunity to go through it. I believe my past is the reason for my passion and the love I have for helping others.”

Sarah, now living in Austin, has love for the great sport of tennis and enjoys the opportunities it can bring to her players. She has been married to her husband Tommie for 39 years and together they have two sons, a son-in-law, a daughter, a grandson, a granddaughter, all of whom are involved in tennis.

At first glance, the soft-spoken family matriarch known to many as Mrs. Sarah seems an unlikely person to become the “Tennis Mama” for the Austin area. Growing up in the rural parts Alabama, she had absolutely no childhood tennis background. Instead, while trying to find a suitable activity for her hyperactive 11-year old son; the game of tennis found her and the Pernell family, and it has become an excellent example of the proverbial “Match Made in Heaven.”

Upon her arrival in Austin in 1997, Mrs. Sarah founded a non-profit organization called “Project Helping Hand” that provided assistance to disadvantaged families relocating in the greater Austin area. As she saw how the game of tennis helped her son grow as a person while he advanced as a player (he would go on to become a three-time player of the year at his high school, the Capital Area Tennis Association (CATA) Junior Player of the Year, and among the top five ranked Texas “Super Champ” players in the 14s, 16s and 18s).

Through his success she became aware of how few minority players were benefiting in a similar fashion from exposure of the game of tennis. In an attempt to remedy this situation in 1998, Ms. Sarah along with other community leaders founded the Central Texas Tennis Association (CTTA), a 501c3 organization. Her primary mission was to expand tennis opportunities for populations who have been traditionally under-represented in the Austin tennis community and as a result tennis became a point of focus for her entire family. CTTA is committed to bringing the game of tennis to children of Austin and surrounding areas and other low income areas in communities. CTTA sees the game of tennis as a way to combat childhood obesity, develop life skills such as discipline, leadership and responsibility and act as a tool to keep kids in school. Tennis is a lifetime sport, and our goal is to make it accessible to everyone. Each year CTTA reaches hundreds of area children with free /low cost programs with the help of Austin Parks and

Sarah Pernell

Rec., USTA-United States Tennis Association, CATA- Capital Area Tennis Association, Glimmer of Hope and AWTAA-Austin Women Tennis Association.

She has served as vice president and three-time board member of the Capital Area Tennis Association and a member of the USTA Texas Section Executive Board. Her efforts have been recognized in many ways for her myriad contributions to her community and the game of tennis. She has received a Heroes of Central Texas Award from the American Red Cross, a Heritage Award from the City of Austin, an outstanding Contribution Award from the Austin Parks and Recreation Department, and a "No Court, No Problem" Award from the USTA Texas Section.

She and her family have been past winners of the CATA Family of the Year award and are members of the CATA Junior Development Committee. In 2000, the Pernell family was featured in the American Tennis Association (ATA) and Texas Section Quarterly magazine. In 2002 she and her program (CTTA) were featured in Southern Living. In 2003 she received USTA Texas Section MPC Motivator of the year award. Her association received the NJTL Chapter of the Year Award in 2003 for the Texas Section, and in 2012 CTTA won the National NJTL program of the year.

Mrs. Pernell received the "Five Who Cares" Austin Award which is a community service award; she is a volunteer with the Austin Parks and Rec., Capital Area Tennis Association (CATA), Safe Place, and with an organization for the prevention and education on family violence, along with serving a mentor and tutor with several AISD local schools, mentor for two Del Valle schools and an Advocate with CASA, an organization that fights for the well-being of children in foster care.

In a nut shell Mrs. Sarah has the motivation and ability to involve and inspire others and has an overall love for helping others. She has a devotion to Texas tennis, primarily in Austin in which she is willing to work a full time job on a volunteer's salary. She is the heart and soul of one the fastest growing tennis community in the state, and even with no facility, no money she never waivers in her pursuit to make CTTA the best and most effective Community tennis association (CTA) in the city and in Texas.

When you talk about tennis in Austin, Mrs. Sarah's name will always come up, and every Community Tennis Association should be so lucky to have someone like her in their organization.

Sarah Pernell

Sarah is a staunch supporter of the game of tennis throughout the City of Austin. She is especially fond of this particular site as it is in East Austin and does provide the youth and community with the opportunity to experience the love of the game right in their backyard so to speak. During the discussions regarding where the place the center, she advocated for an East Austin facility. She has also utilized the facility for her Summer Jam fundraiser as well as many of her youth programs.

