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NKU business students advise local charities

By Howard McEwen
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HIGHLAND HEIGHTS - Local charities that often run on shoestring budgets are getting some serious advice from business management students at NKU - for free.

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Students from NKU's Resource Acquisition and Management class received course credit this fall for helping the Inner City Tennis Project, a Cincinnati-based program that uses tennis as a way to teach life skills to needy youth. Fifty-five of the program's participants since 1986 have gone on to earn scholarships at Division I or II colleges.

"When you're doing everything to keep the program going on the court, we didn't have the time to raise money or organize," said Rachel Fair, who runs the program with fellow Cincinnati Recreation Commission employee Tony Pack.

The students made recommendations about how to interview and choose people for the program's board of directors and when to have fund-raisers. They also suggested launching an adopt-a-player program to raise money.

"We couldn't have paid to get better assistance. The work they did was outstanding," Fair said. "Everything they suggested was usable."

The class, led by assistant professor Julie Olberding, is designed to give students the skills to learn fund-raising techniques along with budgeting and planning skills.

"This is an example of service learning," said Olberding. "The benefits are improved critical thinking skills, enhanced communications and other work-life skills."

Students said they get a lot of the real-world experience.

"It is one thing to read about ideas and ways to operate fund-raising or manage nonprofits, but to actually have to incorporate that skill into tangible, realistic goals or events is unparalleled," student Traci Mattera said.

"It was wonderful to have the opportunity to put what we learned from the text into practice. It was a double bonus to know that what we were learning and doing was going to be applied to an agency that we have come to care about," said David Moore Jr., a firefighter in his final year of graduate school at NKU.

The class's next project will be to assist the Arthritis Foundation's Jingle Bell Run on Saturday. They will help organize a team on NKU's campus, submit recommendations on maintaining and improving the event and help manage the event.

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