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2009 College Table Tennis National Championships

April 3-5 in Rochester, Minnesota

WEBSITE: <http://www.nctta.com/champs/2009/index.html>

****NEWS RELEASE****

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ROCHESTER, Minnesota-Umpires, scorekeepers and the folks staffing information tables are among the scores of volunteers working countless hours to make for a successful 2009 NCTTA championship.

The assignment for these unsung heroes of the Nationals began well before Friday's opening of the three-day tournament in Minnesota.

As the women's singles championship was wrapping up Saturday, Pete Wottreng, a computer programmer from Rochester, discussed his role. He coordinates the 47 volunteers from his hometown. About 75 percent come from the Rochester Table Tennis Club. Other volunteers come from the Rochester Technical College with its Regional Sports Center hosting the Nationals.

With 250 collegiate players coming from 39 teams nationwide and coaches and fans here for the event, the role of volunteers, who come decked out in blue shirts, is huge.

"This is a classy, first-rate event," said Mitch Seidenfeld of Minneapolis, the overall volunteer coordinator for the 2009 tournament. "My job is to get people together." Many of the volunteers at the Nationals in 2008 at Rochester did a fantastic job a year ago, and most of returned, he said,

The tournament simply wouldn't have happened without them, NCTTA organizers say.

"We provide the scorekeepers, some of the umpires, man the information desks and the practice area management," Pete Wottreng said. And there's more. They help with ushering, setting up and taking down the tables, moving chairs around and whatever else needs to be done.

Wottreng didn't have to twist too many arms to sign up volunteers. He's been a member of the Rochester Table Tennis Club since it's been around for six years and called on friends to pitch in. The work at the tournament, he said, "is really kind of cool. We did it last year – this facility is very special – it's worked out well."

The Regional Sports Center that's welcomed collegiate teams from such schools as California, Duke, Princeton, Columbia and Georgia State for the Nationals, is also home to the Rochester Table Tennis Club.

One of the tournament umpires and an avid table tennis player, Kiswanto Thayib, 44, says he's really having fun. "You get to see the best players – you get to see them up close and personal," he said. As the volunteer umpire watches them play, "you can only dream you can do those shots," he said.

The president of the Rochester Table Tennis Club, Thayib is passionate about the game. “It’s one of the sports that knows no boundaries between young and old, men and women. You can play it your whole life.”

A software engineer for IBM, he worked as a tournament volunteer in 2008 and now 2009. While the event travels to another state next year, the native of Indonesia is hoping the NCTTA Nationals will return to Rochester, Minnesota again.