

# Beyond Tennis



**The Fort**  
Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center  
2017 Annual Report

# Mission

We bring people together of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to embrace the lifelong game of tennis while serving under-resourced youth with the support of the Community.

# Values

Safety,  
Respect,  
Commitment,  
Integrity,  
& Kindness

## Our Partners

Andersen United Community School	Urban Academy Charter School
Bancroft Elementary	Macalester College
Brian Coyle Center	Gustavus Adolphus College
Campfire	InnerCity Tennis
Conway Recreation Center	St. Paul Urban Tennis
Folwell School	USTA Northern
Hmong College Prep Academy	Youthprise
John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary	
Maxfield Magnet Elementary School	
Obama Elementary	
Sanford Middle School	

## Board Committee & ProAm Volunteers

Kim Basile	Meredith Lawrence
Ed Backstrom	Dan Lee
Jeffrey Burton	Charles Miller
John Dennis	Molly Peterson
Deb Ely-Lawrence	Mike Quinn
Jack Foss	Dan Shannon
Annie & Jason Greer	Albert Tsai
Bema Harvell	Jacqueline Tsai
Fartun Hassan	Natalie Tsai
Ann Hathaway	Jessie Tschida
Karen Hoffman	Shundrice Tucker
Janae Krantz-Odendahl	Sarah Twedt
Kathryn Laird	Melva Susana Urgiles
Sharon Larkins	Margot Willett
Brent Lawrence	Pang Vang Yang

## Our Team

**Esther Tsai** Executive Director  
**Christine Nickels** Assistant Executive Director,  
Director of Education & Partnerships  
**Robin Coverdale** Director of Tennis  
**Reid Olsen** Director of Operations  
**Clay Sollenberger** Director of Junior Tennis  
**Richard Buckles** Accounting Manager  
**Kaitlin King** Development Manager  
**Dan Swanson** Stringing Manager  
**Aaron Holland** Tennis Instructor  
**Mike Lunka** Tennis Instructor  
**Nguyen Vo** Junior Player Development Coordinator  
**Judy Long** TennisWorks Stars Coordinator,  
Tennis Instructor  
**Viet Pham** High Performance Tennis Instructor  
**Craig Gordon** Tennis Instructor  
**Christian Maki** Tennis Instructor  
**Luke Elifson** Tennis Instructor  
**David Stingley** Tennis Instructor  
**David Yanagita** Education Assistant, Tennis Instructor  
**Ricky Moua** Education Assistant, Tennis Instructor  
**Jackson Buchanan** Facilities Associate  
**Brad Ferg** Front Desk Associate  
**Brian Grossman** Front Desk Associate  
**Zekeria Nigatu** Front Desk Associate

## Our Board

**Rick Rinkoff** President  
**Thomas Judd** Secretary  
**Santosh Krishnan** Treasurer

<b>John Ahern</b>	<b>Michele Mingo</b>
<b>Melissa Dalum</b>	<b>Keith Radtke</b>
<b>Visala Goswitz</b>	<b>James C. Vaughan</b>
<b>Sue Gregor</b>	

# Dear Friends of the Fort,

In this Beyond Tennis 2017 edition of our annual report, we are delighted to present members of our community who have inspired us to continue the work of our visionary founder, Fred Wells. 2017 was a year of growth, with healthy financials and growth in our board membership, staff and volunteers.

Some of our proudest accomplishments in 2017, achieved through your support, included:

- **15% growth** in patrons
- **1,727 volunteer hours**
- **7,297 tennis experiences** provided to 1,974 under-resourced youth through TennisWorks
- **400 hours of tennis** and physical activity and an additional 200 hours of off-court life skills activities provided through 16 TennisWorks programs
- **4-Star National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) Chapter** rating again received from USTA Foundation—the highest possible rating
- **\$15,000 raised** for bus transportation through ProAm Fund-A-Need fundraiser, enabling kids from Andersen United Community School to travel to The Fort for TennisWorks
- **Charlie Boone** (posthumously), **Bea Langford, Skip Pederson** and **Tony Stingley** honored as 2017 Legends of The Fort at ProAm Fundraiser

Of course, as our Legends of the Fort will tell you, what happens here goes beyond tennis. It's the people you meet and the connections you form that make this place so special. Read on to meet members of our community and find out what The Fort means to people of all ages, backgrounds and levels of experience. The Fort provides support throughout the life cycle of a tennis player, from youth just discovering the game, like the TennisWorks participants you'll meet on page 6, to those for whom tennis becomes almost a second career, like Jim Nichols (page 9).

In addition to looking back at highlights of 2017, we are pleased to share exciting news about the future of The Fort. This year will see the launch of a series of renovations that will make this an even better place to play. As you may be aware, patching and repairs have allowed our two air-supported structures, or "bubbles," to keep doing their job of enabling year-round play, but it's time to upgrade. In addition, we'll gain a court and 28 more parking spots.

Expanding our courts and parking will provide more playing opportunities for our patrons, allow us to serve more youth through TennisWorks, and enable us to host larger USTA tournaments and other events. Our thanks go to the Minneapolis Board of Parks and Recreation for their support as we move forward with this project. We invite you to visit [fwtec.org/capitalcampaign](http://fwtec.org/capitalcampaign) to learn more and to join us in nurturing a place where you love to play!

**Thank you for your friendship. We are most humbled by your generosity and trust.**

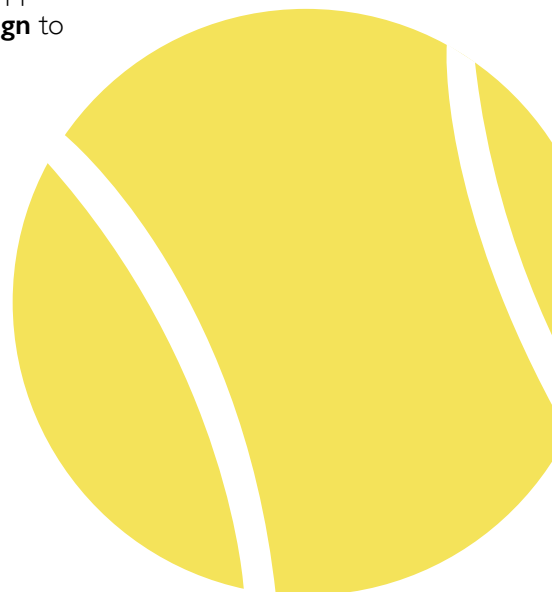
With gratitude,



**Esther Tsai**  
Executive Director



**Rick Rinkoff**  
Board President  
Capital Campaign Co-chair





# Charles Miller & Antonio Haskell: TennisWorks Seniors

## Charles Miller

Through TennisWorks at The Fort, Charles Miller built strong relationships with the coaches and enjoyed socializing with other participants. He also bonded with his grandmother over their shared love of the sport, even getting to play with her wooden racquet. Charles played basketball and football in addition to tennis, but in eighth grade, when his school coaches advised him to focus on one sport, he picked tennis.

His accomplishments include winning the 2015 MID-TAC Tournament and joining The Fort's Youth Advisory Board, and he plans to keep up with tennis at Gustavus Adolphus College, where you'll find him pursuing a chemistry major this fall. His advice for The Fort's budding youth players?

“Get to know the coaches. They are all interesting in their own way, and they all have their own story. Making connections with coaches can go a long way, and so many opportunities can open up for you through them.”

## Antonio Haskell

Through TennisWorks, Antonio Haskell discovered a love of the sport, enjoyed classroom activities, and developed friendships with coaches and staff. He even ended up working here during the summer of 2015. “It didn't even feel like a job,” he says.

Antonio will attend Minnesota State University – Mankato starting this fall and plans to major in aviation. To stay in the game, he intends to start a club tennis team at the college, which currently has no tennis team.

What takeaways would Antonio share with current youth players at The Fort?

“Consistency can take you far both on the court and in life in general. If you keep at something, then you can get better.”

# Maalik Konop-DeFreitas: A Fort Fixture

Maalik Konop-DeFreitas has been a fixture at The Fort almost since it opened. As a kid, he could often be found playing hide-and-seek or King of the Court with other youngsters while his father coached older kids. Maalik played on the Highland Park Senior High School Team; highlights included being runner-up in the 2013 Boys Doubles State Tennis Tournament, Boys 14s Doubles Section Champion, Boys 14s Zonals Qualifier, four-time State Tournament Qualifier, and Northwestern Club Tennis three-time qualifier for USTA Tennis on Campus National Championships, as well as earning a career-high ranking of #3 in the Northern Section.

At Northwestern University, Maalik became very involved in club tennis. He graduated last June with a double major in neurobiology and psychology and will begin dentistry school this fall at UCLA.

“My mom is a dentist, so it was always in the back of my mind, but I never really pursued it until in my junior year I started shadowing one of mom’s colleagues,” he says. “I enjoy working with my hands, so I felt intuitively that dentistry—gaining those skills—would bring fulfillment.”

And of course, playing UCLA club tennis is on the agenda, too.



# TennisWorks

TennisWorks is our youth development continuum serving grades 3–12 through school and community partnerships. TennisWorks uses the game to capture a child's interest and weaves in opportunities to assist youth in developing critical life skills such as goal setting, communication, self-control, time management and teamwork. Academic concepts can also be introduced, taught and reinforced through activities that are relevant to a sport they love.

TennisWorks programming is provided at no cost to participants through a combination of facility revenue, grant funding and individual donations. More than 90% of participants are eligible for the Federal free or reduced lunch program and more than 90% identify as youth of color. At the heart of our program is our deep commitment to providing a safe, supportive environment with caring adults who reinforce our core values of Safety, Respect, Commitment, Integrity and Kindness.



“Tennis is like a family to me, and you can make a lot of beautiful friendships with the people who are around you.” (1) *Lara*

“I enjoy playing tennis and being active.” (2) *Perla*

“The partnership we have with the Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center is, in a word, amazing. The genuine care and commitment that the staff, coaches and volunteers have for our Andersen students is remarkable. When our students step off the bus and walk (or run) into The Fort, they enter an atmosphere of respect and empowerment. Current students recruit their friends to join and many students attend year after year, a clear indication that they feel a sense of belonging and know that they matter at The Fort.”

—*Marija Nicholson, Community Education Coordinator, Andersen United Community School*



“Tennis is another version of myself.” (3) *Melanie*

“TennisWorks is fun education.” (4) *Erick*

“I love to spend extra time with friends.” (5) *Lisset*

“I love being active and playing with friends.” (6) *Emily*



We are grateful to our TennisWorks volunteers, who give generously of their time and talent to support kids' development on and off the tennis court:

Tariq Abdullah  
Greg Anderson  
Ed Backstrom  
Doug Benson  
Paul Dalton  
Mari Daniel-Myers  
Deb Ely-Lawrence  
Deb Frishberg  
Joyce Gavino  
Karen Gjerstad  
Cynthia Hanson  
Sarah Harvell  
Antonio Haskell  
Fartun Hassan  
Elizabeth Kauth  
Meadow Kinder  
Ruth Krishnan  
Santosh Krishnan  
Nancy Lawrence  
Demetrius Lewis  
Charles Miller  
Arya Mirza  
Ethan Porter  
Joe Sachs  
Emme Sugnet  
Jim Vaughn  
Sophia Youngdahl

## Nancy Lawrence: A Committed Volunteer

Fascinated by the courts across the street from her home, at five or six years old Nancy Lawrence talked her parents into getting her a racquet so she could hit against the backboard on her own. As an adult, Nancy played competitively in Women's Day Leagues, USTA teams and mixed doubles. But over the years, she was repeatedly forced to take breaks due to injuries that required surgery, even missing out on competing in Nationals. Finally, she had to stop playing the sport she loved altogether. She found ways to stay involved, including as an umpire; then more than a dozen years ago, she started volunteering with TennisWorks teaching tennis and life skills to kids.

"As a preschool and elementary school teacher, it is a really good fit for me," she says. "It's a blast watching the kids get good so fast."

One of Nancy's favorite memories is of a group of fifth and sixth graders who wanted to play "'real tennis'—keeping score and everything. I said, 'Okay, but this means you have to listen and practice. You have to do boring drills and learn to serve,'" she remembers. "There were days when they were fighting it. But they did it," even having a tournament at the end of the season.

"That was really rewarding for me," says Nancy. It was a great example of the return on the time, energy and skill that she invests in TennisWorks.

"It's my happy place to be," she says.

# Jessie Tschida: Cherishing Tennis

Jessie Tschida comes from a family where everyone plays tennis (although, she jokes, her dad is “more interested in hitting the ball as hard as he can”), so it was natural for her to take up the sport at five. She started playing in Ultra Stars at The Fort a few years later.

“Around age nine, Nguyen and I began doing private lessons and still do to this day, which is why we’re best buds,” says Jessie, who currently plays first singles at the Academy of Holy Angels. She was seeded last year for the Section Tournament and recently traveled to California and Florida for college showcases. Rather than dividing her energy among multiple sports, Jessie reflects, “I play tennis and only tennis because it is something I cherish enough to devote all of my free time to.”

“I definitely would not be the player I am without the consistent support of The Fort coaches and Nguyen,” she says.



# Ethan Ryan: Keeping It Fun

Ethan Ryan started playing tennis in Little Stars at around age seven after his parents, who played at The Fort, decided to make it a family affair. Ethan played both tennis and football until he got his fourth concussion and made the decision to quit football. Now he focuses on varsity tennis at Cretin-Derham Hall, where he is a rising senior, and stops by The Fort when his schedule allows.

“Clay taught me when I was very young to always have a good attitude and go out there to have fun. Don’t worry if you make a mistake, just move on to the next play,” says Ethan. “I really learned from him from saying that. I love playing at the Fort because it’s not just drills, drills, drills—it really is about having fun.”

Ethan maintains that mentality even in tournament play. A favorite memory is of competing in a tournament at Bloomington Jefferson High School. He had never met his doubles partner before, but they shared an emphasis on keeping things fun.

“We made it to the finals. We lost, but I had a great time,” Ethan remembers. He is currently looking forward to a doubles tournament at The Fort this summer in which he will compete with his best friend, Max Henseler, whom he met playing at The Fort. He’s also scouting out colleges this summer—and playing at college is definitely part of the plan.

“Tennis is going to be with me for the rest of my life.”



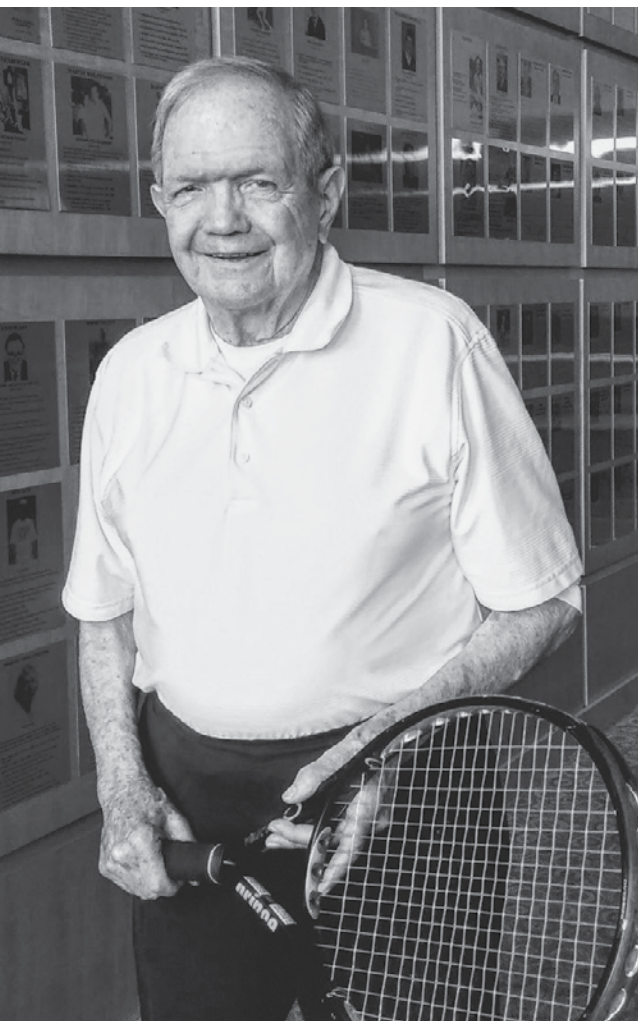
# Molly Peterson: The All-Rounder

Molly Peterson sometimes gets teased for showing up for drills a couple of minutes late. As someone who has been playing at The Fort almost since it opened, who worked here for three years, and who continues to make herself indispensable as a volunteer, she knows, well, almost everybody here.

“Sometimes it’s hard to get out onto the court,” she laughs, because there are so many friends to greet on the way there. Molly taught herself to play tennis in college and loved playing socially. When her youngest of three boys was one, Molly decided it was time to pick up her racquet again, and her love of tennis flourished. She even ended up working at The Fort coordinating Women’s Day League and junior programming. It was Molly who proposed and managed the organization’s transition to an online registration system from paper and pencil.

She remains heavily involved in Women’s Day League and as a volunteer helping to coordinate the annual ProAm Tournament and fundraiser. Molly enjoys tennis for its competitive and athletic aspects—but her favorite part of all?

“It has to be the friendships,” she says.



# Jim Nichols: The Original Legend of the Fort

The first Legend of the Fort, Jim Nichols is more than a patron—he’s a family member. He has an unofficial, yet vital, role managing a league of more than 60 players. Lineups change, but Jim is a constant.

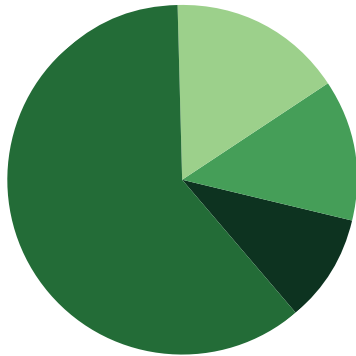
What does it take to schedule twenty-something doubles matches each week? It’s a process that takes 30 to 35 hours a week, much of which happens in the evening and over the weekend, though Jim also fields the occasional urgent 6 a.m. phone call. Although some retired folks like to take it easy, clearly, that’s not Jim. At 88, he’s living proof of Fred Wells’ praise of tennis as a “lifelong game.” But what keeps him coming back to tennis instead of, for example, hopping on a golf cart?

“Friendship, competitiveness, and the activity itself—it’s great exercise. I don’t want people to be couch potatoes!”

# Financials

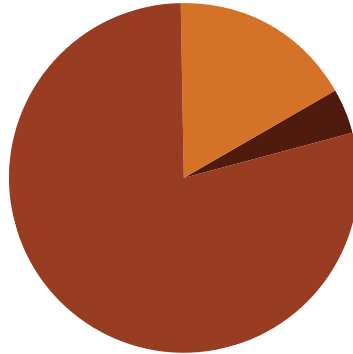
ending December 31, 2017

Revenues

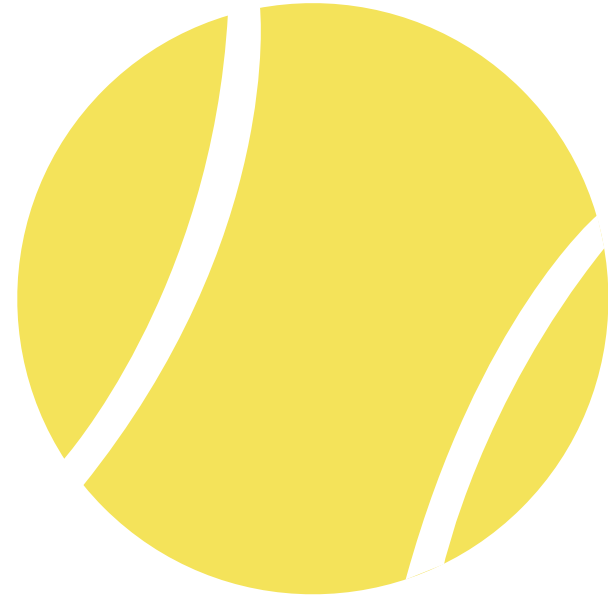


- Programs: 61%
- Court Time: 16%
- Fundraising & Contributions (excludes Capital Campaign): 13%
- Other Income: 10%

Expenses



- Program Services: 79%
- Management & General: 17%
- Fundraising: 4%



# Balance Sheet

## Unrestricted Revenues & Other Support

	2017	2016
Program Revenues	1,440,235	1,236,124
Support	202,909	308,984
Other Support	42,192	17,637
Campaign Contributions	235,429	-
Expenses	1,748,687	1,594,433
Net Assets Increase (Decrease)	172,078	(31,688)

## Statement of Financial Position

Total Assets	3,165,956	2,963,562
Total Liabilities	217,903	187,587
Total Net Assets	2,948,053	2,775,975

## Statement of Cash Flows

Cash at Beginning of Year	413,996	350,964
Cash at End of Year	650,334	413,996

# Our Donors

Thank you to our generous donors!

## Foundation Support

**\$70,000** Wells Family Foundation Trust  
**\$28,000** USTA Foundation  
**\$23,179** Youthprise  
**\$10,000** Sheltering Arms Foundation  
**\$3,300** USTA Northern  
**\$2,500** USTA National  
**\$250** Minneapolis Foundation

## Capital Campaign

**\$156,380** Rick Rinkoff & Julia Ferguson  
**\$50,680** Tom & Michele Mingo  
**\$25,000** Wells Family Foundation Trust  
**\$500** Carol Heen  
**\$150** Andy Dizon

## General Support

### \$5,000+

Robert & Aimee Mairs

### \$2,500–\$4,999

Visala & Joe Goswitz  
Tom & Michele Mingo  
Rick Rinkoff & Julia Ferguson

### \$1,000–\$2,499

John & Christie Ahern  
Kathy Bjornson  
Craig-Hallum  
Dom & Nancy Driano  
Philippe Duliere  
Faegre, Baker, Daniels  
Ann Hathaway  
Thalia Hooker & Pam Koehler  
Steve & Alex Klass-Warch  
Santosh & Ruth Krishnan  
Mark & Nancy Lawrence  
Kathy Loeffler & Jeff Nelson  
Viet Pham & Jess Applebaum  
James Porter & Elyse Rabinowitz  
Keith & Jody Radtke  
Albert & Esther Tsai  
Sarah & Mark Twedt  
Larry & Dawn Voelkers

### \$500–\$999

Cynthia Brady  
James Buchanan  
John Carnahan & Leslie Yoder  
Jerry Goodrich  
Ann Hathaway & Family  
Christopher & Ann Hilger  
Curt & Karen Hoffman  
Terry Jackson  
Dan & Liz Lee  
Judy Long  
Tom & Molly Peterson

Tony & Ronda Stingley  
David Vanney & Cathy Ruther  
James Vaughan  
Nguyen & Emi Vo  
Steve Wendt  
Margot Willett and Bob Miller  
Frank Zink & Katie Resch

### \$100–\$499

James Baldwin & Mary Atmore  
Jo Ellen Batty-George  
Patrick & Bridget Batzler  
Michael and Ellen Bendel-Stenzel  
Andrea Birkeland  
Nancy Brown  
Roseanne Bryne  
Patti Campbell  
Phil & Cheryl Carlson  
Cathy Curtis  
Ryan & Melissa Dalum  
Lisa Dick-Hulteen  
James Drahos  
Terese Erickson  
Jack & Madeline Foss  
Karen Gjerstad  
Anita Goulett  
Nancy Greer  
Sue Gregor  
Otto Grosse  
Cindy Hames  
Michael & Cindy Harriage  
Sally S. Hart  
Rich Heichert  
Kevin & Mary Henseler  
Stacey & Dion Johnson  
Thomas Judd  
Elizabeth Kauth  
Jackie Kirk  
Roger & Susie Kleppe  
Linda Langeness  
Sarah Leslie  
Mike Lettman  
Niandong Liu & Xingzhou Zhou  
Bill Lunka  
Rose Lunka  
Margaret Madden  
Diane Meyers  
Marcie Myers  
Marija Nicholson  
Tom & Christine Nickels  
Reid & Aubrey Olsen  
Anne Parker  
Skip & Ann Pederson  
Henry Pellegrin  
Dave & Kerry Reiling  
Christine Salmen  
Todd and Kelly Schnell  
Richard & Marianne Seidenstricker

Diane Snodgrass  
Bob Snyder  
Vivien Talghader  
Megan Tucci  
Mary Kay Ulness  
Patricia Undlin  
Joey Utvik  
Pat & Verena Van Fleet  
Jon & Maricarol Wallace  
Cindy Walz  
Karen Welle  
Wells Fargo Community Fund  
Terry Willems  
Gary Yanagita

### Up to \$100

Erin Bjorkstrand  
Gale Buskirk  
Jim Butala  
Lisa Cohen  
Karen Cronin  
Annette Cunningham  
Laura Dale  
Diamond Ho  
Aaron & Elizabeth Holland  
Ron & Sherry Houle  
Jerry & Judy Hunt  
Dan & Nancy Klausner  
Jamie Lukehart  
Andy & Joy Montgomery  
Garrett Mulrooney  
& Anissa Mediger  
Steven Nyman  
Stephanie Rasley  
Ed & Heidi Schaefer  
Dan Shannon & Karen Berg  
Shirley Shimota  
Venkat Srinivasan  
Amy Strabala  
Lee Tourtelotte  
Riley Washington  
Ric Yates  
Tom & Kristen Ziebol  
Eric Ziegler

## Nguyen Vo Family Scholarship Fund

### \$1,000+

Nguyen & Emi Vo  
Keith & Anne-Marie Wittenberg

### \$100–\$499

Mark Duthoy  
Niandong Liu & Xingzhou Zhou

### Up to \$100

Cynthia Betz

## Jolene Laurence Memorial Fund

### \$5,000+

Anonymous

### Up to \$250

Friends of Jolene

## In-Kind

### \$5,000+

Thomas Judd

### \$2,500–\$4,999

DeGidio's Restaurant & Bar

### \$1,000–\$2,499

FASTSIGNS  
Lawrence Auctioneering LLC  
USTA Northern  
Women's Day League

### \$500–\$999

Haskell's

### \$100–\$499

Sybil Axner  
Darren & Sharon Larkins  
Guthrie Theatre  
McCranken Manzey Consulting  
Tennis On Selby  
Nguyen Vo

### Up to \$100

Robin Coverdale  
Luke Elifson  
Craig Gordon  
Aaron Holland  
John & Gretchen Jensen  
Judy Long  
Mike Lunka  
Christian Maki  
Ordway Center  
for the Performing Arts  
Clay Sollenberger  
David Stingley

# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

## Beyond Tennis: Building the Future

Our sincere thanks to each one of you who participated in the recent interviews and surveys conducted by Mark Davy & Associates as we prepared to launch our capital campaign. We received a great deal of valuable feedback and pertinent questions about the Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center. We would like to take this opportunity to answer some of those questions.

### Why is The Fort a nonprofit?

Patrons who access our affordable fee-based tennis programming and court time are not necessarily aware that The Fort also offers our TennisWorks program to children in grades 3–12 from under-resourced communities. We ensure that TennisWorks is available at no cost to participants, and we provide transportation, healthy snacks and equipment for students to use. Funding for TennisWorks comes primarily from annual donations and grants.

### The Fort has been around since 2002 and has never needed a capital campaign before. Why is one necessary now?

Our founder, Fred Wells, secured a 21-year lease agreement with the City of Minneapolis Board of Parks and Recreation to build a state-of-the-art tennis facility on this site. We pay in-kind rent for our lease. In order to renew it, we are required to replace our aging air-supported structures, or “bubbles.” Additionally, our parking lot is no longer sufficient to accommodate our patrons and visitors. Expanding our parking will allow us to accommodate more players as well as larger USTA tournaments and other events. Because revenue from our fee-based programming supports our day-to-day operations, we are launching a capital campaign to fund these significant renovations and improvements.

### How will this project make The Fort better?

The new bubbles will allow for better lighting and energy efficiency and the addition of air conditioning. We will also reconfigure and resurface our courts, adding a court for a total of nine. Storage for ball machine and ball carts will be added, along with a new drinking fountain. Outside the building, lighting and security will be improved, and our parking lot will be expanded and reconfigured to add 28 spaces.

### When will these improvements be complete?

A new walkway and entrance to the bubbles will be constructed in summer 2018. In summer and early fall 2019, the bubbles will be replaced one by one and the courts resurfaced, and the parking lot will be reconfigured and resurfaced. We anticipate that the entire project will be complete by the end of September 2019.

### Why isn't The Fort getting the funding from the Minneapolis Board of Parks and Recreation or from Fred Wells' family?

The Fort leases land from the City of Minneapolis Board of Parks and Recreation and pays in-kind rent, but we are responsible for the maintenance of our facility. The Board of Parks and Recreation has been very supportive of our planned improvements to our campus. We are also deeply grateful to the Wells family for continuing to support our mission and Fred Wells' vision with an annual contribution from the family foundation that he established.

### Will there be naming rights for the capital campaign?

We'd be very happy to talk with you about various opportunities for naming rights.

### How is the capital campaign progressing?

It is with much joy that I share with you generous lead gifts from our capital campaign co-chairs and their spouses. **Rick Rinkoff and Julia Ferguson have gifted us \$150,000 and Michele and Tom Mingo have gifted us \$50,000 to kick off this campaign.** Their commitment to The Fort's mission is heartwarming, and I hope you will consider joining them to help nurture this place where you love to play.

Sincerely,



**Esther Tsai**  
Executive Director

The Fort  
fwtec.org