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 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 Buchanian Facilities Associate
Brad Ferg Front Desk Associate
Brian Buchanan Front Desk Associate
Zekeria Nigatu Front Desk Associate

Our Partners

Andersen United Community School
Bancroft Elementary
Brian Coyle Center
Campfire
Conway Recreation Center
Folwell School
Hmong College Prep Academy
John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary
Maxfield Magnet Elementary School
Obama Elementary
Sanford Middle School

Urban Academy Charter School
Macalester College
Gustavus Adolphus College
InnerCity Tennis
St. Paul Urban Tennis
USTA Northern Youthprise

Board Committee & ProAm Volunteers

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

Rick Rinkoff President
Thomas Judd Secretary
Santosh Krishnan Treasurer

Our Board

John Ahern
Michele Mingo
Melissa Dalum
Keith Radtke
Visala Goswitz
James C. Vaughan
Sue Gregor
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 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 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 another version of myself.” (3) Melanie
“TennisWorks is fun education.” (4) Erick
“I love being active and playing with friends.” (6) Emily

“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 like a family to me, and you can make a lot of beautiful friendships with the people who are around you.” (1) Iara
“I enjoy playing tennis and being active.” (2) Perla
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!”

Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center  fwtec.org
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Revenues</td>
<td>1,440,235</td>
<td>1,236,124</td>
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<td>Support</td>
<td>202,909</td>
<td>308,984</td>
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<td>Other Support</td>
<td>42,192</td>
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<td>Campaign Contributions</td>
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<td>Expenses</td>
<td>1,748,687</td>
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<td>Net Assets Increase (Decrease)</td>
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Statement of Financial Position

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<td>Total Liabilities</td>
<td>2,17,903</td>
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<td>Total Net Assets</td>
<td>2,948,053</td>
<td>2,775,975</td>
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Statement of Cash Flows

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<tr>
<td>Cash at Beginning of Year</td>
<td>413,996</td>
<td>350,964</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cash at End of Year</td>
<td>650,334</td>
<td>413,996</td>
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Our Donors

Thank you to our generous donors!

Foundation Support

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<td>$70,000</td>
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<td>USTA Foundation</td>
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<td>$23,179</td>
<td>Youthprise</td>
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<td>$10,000</td>
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<td>$250</td>
<td>Minneapolis Foundation</td>
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Capital Campaign

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<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$156,380</td>
<td>Rick Rinkoff &amp; Julia Ferguson</td>
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<td>$50,680</td>
<td>Tom &amp; Michele Mingo</td>
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<td>$25,000</td>
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<td>$500</td>
<td>Carol Heen</td>
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<tr>
<td>$150</td>
<td>Andy Dizon</td>
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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 Driere
- 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 & Joss Applebaum
- James Porter & Elyse Rabinowitz
- Keith & Judy 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 Bätzler
- 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
- Marja Nicholson
- Tom & Christine Nickels
- Reid & Aubrey Olsen
- Anne Parker
- Skip & Ann Pederson
- Henry Pellegrin
- Dave & Kerry Reiling
- Christine Salmon
- 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
- Ennn 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 Tourtelot
- Riley Washington
- Ric Yates
- Tom & Kristen Ziebol
- Eric Ziegler

Nguyen Vo Family Scholarship Fund

$1,000+
- Nguyen & Emi Vo

$100–$499
- Mark Duthoy
- Niandong Liu & Xingzhou Zhou

$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

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
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

Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center    100 Federal Dr S. St. Paul, MN 55111
612-252-8367   EIN#: 41-1965977