The Fort
Fred Wells Tennis & Education Center

2020 Annual Report
Coming Together
Our 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.

Our Values

Community - Inclusivity - Joy - Accountability

Our Board

President: Rick Rinkoff  Vice President: John Ahern  Secretary: Thomas Judd  Treasurer: Santosh Krishnan  Directors: David Erickson, Jack Foss, Visala Goswitz, Ann Hathaway, Michele Mingo, Keith Radtke, Jim Vaughan

Our Volunteers


Our Staff

Esther Tsai, Ally Baker, Ryan Berkas, Richard Buckles, Robin Coverdale, Jackson Farley, Craig Gordon, Brian Grossman, Aaron Holland, Judy Long, Mike Lunka, Christian Maki, Isaac McBroom, Grady McHugh, Lisa Mushett, Christine Nickels, Viet Pham, Martin Schneider, Ursula Shute, Clay Sollenberger, Levin Stewart, David Stingley, Dan Swanson, Nguyen Vo, Niltooli Wilkins
A Letter From
Esther and Rick

Dear friends of The Fort,

2020 is a year we’ll never forget. Although compounded by the crisis of the pandemic, we could not be prouder of how The Fort has continued to move forward and evolve despite the considerable challenges. This a testament of our Fort community coming together during difficult times and looking out for one another. And because of you, we have been able to continue to focus on our mission of bringing people together of all ages, abilities and backgrounds and providing support for youth with less access to resources.

When the stay-at-home order was enacted, many patrons expressed concern for our staff and their well-being. We are very grateful to our board for caring and supporting our staff with a compensation plan during the closure period. Many of you also came forward with generous donations supporting our COVID-19 emergency relief fund.

The COVID restrictions posed challenges to further our capital campaign fundraising efforts; hence the campaign ended in June raising 1.125 million although our goal was 1.7 million. We were blessed by an anonymous “Guardian Angel” who stepped in big time and provided the final $100,000 donation. The Fort remained financially solvent and found a way to complete the replacement of the back air-supported bubble.

We are very grateful to the Wells family Isora Foundation; they have remained our key grant funder since the opening in 2002 supporting The Fort’s general operations, youth scholarships and capital campaign. This funding allows us to persevere and keep our focus on delivering our mission. We are humbled and honored to become one of the Foundation’s Wells Legacy grant recipients in the coming year.

2020 stretched us in many ways and has led to an even greater appreciation of the power that tennis and our community has in improving physical, mental, and social well-being. We have doubled down on our charge to ensure equitable access to these benefits regardless of age, ability, or background, and we thank you for your partnership and unwavering support in this effort.

With gratitude,

Esther Tsai
Executive Director

Rick Rinkoff
Board President
Play on, staying healthy...

"Why did you continue to play tennis at The Fort during Covid?"

**The Colton Family:** "We are lucky enough to be in the medical field, so we were able to calculate the risk versus benefits of playing indoor. We decided it was more beneficial to keep playing a sport we love and stay active throughout the pandemic knowing The Fort has all the precautions in place. We trusted The Fort staff to do their part in keeping us safe."

**Sandhya Joshi and Gopal Sadagopal:** “Firstly, we love tennis and secondly we want to “Support The Fort” in their mission to bring the sport to everyone in a inclusive manner. We saw that The Fort followed CDC and State mandated protocols, they were careful in screening people entering and playing with a mask on wasn’t as bad as we had thought it might be. The friendliness of the staff and their dedication to the game both on and off court.”

**Jim Nichols:** “The way you have redone the tennis center with new air filters, air-conditioning and the inside environment, make us feel very safe and comfortable. During COVID, 85% of our players continued playing tennis in our senior leagues. I am very passionate about the game: love organizing and getting our people to keep playing tennis during COVID to stay active. Pre-COVID, we consistently had 20 courts reserved each week and I am confident most of our players will be returning this fall. I think it is important that seniors like us be given the opportunity to play competitive tennis as it is great exercise. Five members in our league are over 90 years including myself. Many are in their 80s. For good health play tennis. It is more than a racquet.”

**Phil Hallaway:** “I continued to play at The Fort because the pay back outweighed the risk. The Fort had good safety protocols in place and I felt safe. I enjoy playing tennis, and connecting with people of all ages and cultures. Coming to The Fort got me out of the house, and kept me active. The other reason I kept coming to The Fort was to support the organization financially. If no one showed up, The Fort would not get any revenue and it worried me that the coaches could have a financial struggle.”
...in a pandemic year.

David Schultz: “Tennis is simply not a sport. It is about building together mind, body, integrity, and team building. During the pandemic and afterwards, The Fort was a welcoming place that nourished these four virtues. That is why I came back to The Fort, that is why I stay.”

Nancy Brown: “The impeccable cleanliness, CDC guidelines that were fully supported by staff/patrons and our unconditional commitment to those guidelines helped me feel safe and ensure The Fort would remain open to our community throughout the pandemic.”

Kaylan Pingilli: “We were so amazed the way the Fred Wells team has handled the COVID-19 situation, safety measures taken by each and every one working at Fred Wells give us the confidence to play. We are really impressed the way the staff handled the situation overall.”

Lauren Schenck: “I chose to allow Lauryn to continue playing tennis at The Fort because I saw what the leadership and staff quickly implemented to ensure top priority for the safety and well-being of their staff and patrons. I read and saw where the staff made physical changes and took additional protection measures around the tennis facility. Also, Lauryn loves playing tennis at The Fort because she has always felt the welcoming environment from the staff and coaches there. In addition, The Fort’s leadership and staff also lead by example, that all those who desire to learn and play the game of tennis are welcome.”

Reese Ellingson: “From a parent perspective, Reese continued to play tennis as we feel physical activity is very important plus the social aspect. Kids need to move, meet friends and have healthy relationships. Reese is a very athletic child and we would never take tennis or hockey from her regardless of the situation.”

Sue Hommeyer: “During the pandemic, The Fort became my outlet and happy place. I was pleased you put the protocols in place and it was diligently enforced as the protocols were not good in many other places. So the only way I would have come back is knowing The Fort was being overly cautious. It made me feel confident to be in an environment with other people social distancing and following mask requirements. I feel fortunate to be part of The Fort community.”
Distance Learning Day Program

With schools not returning in-person in the Fall of 2020, The Fort launched a Distance Learning Day Program to support our students’ evolving needs. Our upstairs classrooms were transformed into supportive library spaces, and our atrium served as a socially-distanced café where students could connect over their varying lunch breaks. In the afternoon, the students headed to the courts for 1.5 hours of tennis with professional coaches. Van transportation was provided, as we were able with capacity limits, as well as healthy snacks and lunch.

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<th>Highlights</th>
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<tr>
<td>· 3 days per week from 7am – 4pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>· 30 students total</td>
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<tr>
<td>· 9 different Minneapolis schools</td>
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<td>· Grades 4-10</td>
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“I like being here because I don’t get distracted while I do schoolwork and I also don’t get distracted by video games.”
- Day Program Participant

A perfect combination to support physical, mental, social, and academic needs!
Food Deliveries/ Clothing Drives/ Home Visits

Our Fort community rallied around each other to support basic family needs at a time of increased challenge in 2020. TennisWorks coaches hit the road to complete four rounds of home visits to check in with students each month during the summer and over the Thanksgiving holiday. Fresh groceries were provided along with tennis equipment, enrichment activities, cash assistance from a generous donor, and gift cards.

We also supported the Urban Academy winter clothing drive, collected winter fun kits for families, and distributed 3,000 pairs of Bombas socks to six local schools thanks to a partnership with the USTA Foundation and Bombas.

Programming in the Parks

Tennis is a great socially distanced sport, and we created new summer programming to engage TennisWorks students and families at an outdoor tennis facility in Minneapolis on Friday afternoons during the summer of 2020. 54 unique students participated over 10 weeks.

Our Fearlessly GiRL program transitioned from Zoom to in-person in late June with girls and adult coach mentors coming together on Tuesday evenings at Lake Hiawatha Park in Minneapolis.

Virtual Programming

We journeyed together in 2020 to establish new and bring back old ways to stay connected and support each other whether it was over Instagram, on ZOOM or Google Meet, group text, coach videos or good ‘ol snail mail.
A Community Coming Together...

“The Fort is special to me because of its awesome sense of community. It feels like family! Fred Wells’ mission of service, care and compassion for our younger members and greater community is both admirable and inspiring. The Fort’s heart is in the right place and aligns with my own both on and off the tennis court!” Molly Fischer

“I began hitting at The Fort in 2017 and since then I have not only gained the knowledge and skill of tennis, but I have gained so many friends. At The Fort I am able to learn tennis as well as life skills that I apply in my day-to-day life. For example, the respect of others on and off the court. At The Fort I am able to hit with different friends every day. Together we are able to walk on and off the court as friends while also competing and learning from each other.” Mary Kate

“I like The Fort because there is a lot of support, and they are caring people that will protect you and keep you safe. Everyone is welcome to come, and I hope we get to see more people at tennis center plus they make you laugh and do fun stuff with you. Everyone is welcomed!” Ashley
Tennis Boom

A Community Coming Together... Day After Day

“Having my kids play tennis at The Fort was a no-brainer for me. The Pros make it a point to know your children individually and they make tennis fun! I personally love The Fort’s community feel and the fact that they have an after-school program that serves under resourced youth.” Sally Leary

“As a single dad, I cannot tell you how awesome Fearlessly GiRL is for girls at this age. I feel like I’m a good dad but the exercises and activities you provide are invaluable and definitely things I would not have thought to get into. I worry a lot about socialization at this age and would even if COVID wasn’t a thing but worry more because of all the isolation students have. They are burying themselves in their devices now more than ever. So, kudos to The Fort for recognizing a need and making it happen.” Shannon O’Hanlon

“I am pleased to financially support the Fort’s programs, and in particular its youth programs - those that develop self-esteem in combination with fun activities, community-building and skill-building. The Fort’s outreach to underserved populations and anti-racism messaging make it especially attractive to me as a donor.” Liz Hathaway Castelán
Financials
Ending December 31, 2020

Revenues & Other Support
Program Revenues
Support

2020
1,296,125
860,876

2019
1,693,850
784,812

Net assets released from restrictions
Restrictions satisfied by payments or time

135,500
446,187

Total Revenues and Other Support without Donor Restriction

2,165,197
2,493,066

Statement of Cash Flow
Cash at Beginning of Year
Cash at End of Year

1,113,789
661,697

909,263
1,113,789

Statement of Net Assets
Net Assets Beginning of Year
Net Assets End of Year

3,176,818
3,343,489

3,217,274
3,176,818

Donors

$100,000+
Anonymous Household

$65,000+
Isora Foundation

$50,000+
USTA National

$25,000+
Anonymous Household

$10,000-$24,999
Otto Bremer Trust

$5,000-$9,999
USTA Foundation

$2,500-$4,999
Wells Family Fund

$1,000-$2,499
Minneapolis Foundation

$500-$999
Sheltering Arms

$250-$999
Foundation

$100-$249
Foundation

Expenses

Programs
Court Time
Fundraising & Contributions
Other Income

$65,000+
Vivien Talghader

$50,000+
Christopher Galler

$25,000+
Caryn Sullivan & Peter & Maria Stitzel

$20,000+
Tony & Ronda Stingley

$15,000+
Amy & Matthew Steuart

$10,000+$
Diane Snodgrass

$5,000+
Brian Shoemaker

$3,000+
Soundara

$2,000+
Brian Shoemaker

$1,000+
Thuy Tran

$650+
Cindy & Joe Walz

$500+
Jeremy & Carrie Webb

$250+
Jennifer Wenck

$150+
Margot Willett & Bob Miller

$100+
Frank Zink & Katie Resch

Up to $249
Suzanne Anderson

Krista Anderson

Kristi Anderson

Tiffany & Sam Anderson

Christopher Angell

Meena Arun

Sybil Axner

Melissa Bartz

Carolyn

Tobi Bell

Tom & Becky Berkas

Raju Bhupatiraju

Kathy Bjornson

Teresa Borzick

Thierry Boudet

Vadim Braginsky

Betsy Braman

Angie Brinkmeier

Shannon Browne

Diane Bundlie

Ann Burt

Jim Butala

Roseanne & David

Bryan

Joan Cahill

Matthew Callahan

Stephanie Callahan

Becky & Aldo

Cantellano

Tori Carlisano

Ryan Carlson
The Fort
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