



SouthWest Region Annual Report for 2024

This report is authored by the Region Chair, Rosemary Goodwin. It marks my third year in this position, with previous reports for 2022 and 2023. Special thanks to Steve Knight, who looks after our bank account; to Bruce Cates, who directs the Tennis Rocks event and promotes tennis in the Burlington schools; and to Oliver Barkovic, who manages our social media presence. Thanks also to the countless club leaders, league directors, coaches, players and parents who shared insights and observations throughout the year.

Our Tennis Clubs

The essential feature of SouthWest Region is the tennis clubs. They're the fundamental tennis providers in the communities across Halton Region, the City of Hamilton, Niagara Region and Haldimand-Norfolk. The club presidents accept ultimate responsibility for their clubs, therefore are critical to the health and well-being of our sport. Region-wide, they lead hundreds of other volunteers. The clubs provide programs and operations, and also maintain and upgrade their facilities - most being public assets.

The highlight of the year is the completion of a large renovation project at Rosedale TC in Hamilton. The club rebuilt four hard courts and added a year-round bubble, all at the club's own expense. In addition, they staged an ambitious celebration of the Billie Jean King Cup Champions Tour with 32 beautiful girls and 12 coaches. It was an honour and a privilege to host the Billie Jean Cup in SWR, and we heartily congratulate the Rosedale TC for all they accomplished in 2024.

The Dundas TC celebrated 100 years, and Stoney Creek TC celebrated 60 years. Courts were resurfaced at Ancaster TC and Tyandaga TC. New court construction began in St Catharines and at Queenston Heights.

As a Region, we endeavour to support the clubs with monthly email communications and with in-person visits. We encourage club presidents to network with each other through in-person exchanges at the OTA AGM, at the NBO Presidents Day and at the SWR AGM. Clubs are supported by the OTA office through regular ClubStrong emails and the option of various programs and services.

The new SWR website - SouthWestOntarioTennis.ca - is designed to support clubs as well. The CLUBS section includes a brief feature for each club. The OUR STORIES section includes photos and articles to provide recognition and manifest appreciation. In general, the website is designed to give a region-wide view of our sport, as well as historical context for the region.

The OTA Roadshow and SmashCage came to Burlington TC, Grimsby TC, Milton TC, Ancaster TC, Nassagaweya TC and Welland TC.

Volunteer recognition with the Bruce Childs Award was undertaken by Ancaster TC, Grimsby TC and Welland TC. Two clubs received OTA Club Achievement Awards : North Burlington TC and Welland TC.

Doug Carter, co-founder of the Niagara Academy of Tennis, was honoured with a Tennis Canada Special Achievement Award during the National Bank Open.

Inter-Club and Multi-Club Activities

Another essential element is provided by the leaders of our team tennis leagues and our invitational tournaments. These leagues and events are designed for adult players, are organized and managed by volunteers, and are open to all the clubs in the region.

- Lakeshore League : our largest team tennis operation, including clubs from both SouthWest and West Central Regions. It includes five levels of play and extends throughout the outdoor season. Operated by Alex Bittermann and Greg Kirsten (successors to Amanda Arkaev).
- Burlington-Hamilton Ladies League : team play for women during the months of May and June. Operated by Helen Donohoe and Dot Knight.
- 55-Plus League : doubles play for men and women, includes clubs in both SouthWest and West Regions, and runs through the summer months. Operated by Pat Moran.
- Niagara Tennis League : comprised of teams formed from individual player registration. 8 teams, each with 8 players, compete on Sunday afternoons at Youngs Sportsplex (Welland) in three 8-week playing blocs over the course of the fall-winter-spring. Operated by Tan Qureshi and Munzil Qureshi.

Two SWR clubs host invitational tournaments, open to all players in the region and beyond :

- The Rose City Classic is hosted by the Welland TC in June, with a volunteer committee of club members. Play extends over a full week or more and includes multiple playing levels. The club also invites SWR clubs to participate in their Junior-Senior Tournament and their Oktoberfest Doubles.
- The Niagara Slam is hosted by the Fort Erie TC and operated by Tan Qureshi and Munzil Qureshi. It runs for two weeks in July and features singles and doubles at multiple playing levels.

Coordination with Ontario Senior Games Association :

In odd-numbered years, the OSGA conducts a province-wide multi-sport games, including tennis. Players (55-plus years of age) qualify for the provincial games through their OSGA district - of which we have three in SWR. District 24 (Niagara) has competed in these games since 2012. District 21 (Halton) may begin offering tennis in 2025. The provincial tournament is scheduled for Sudbury in August.

In even-numbered years, winners from the Ontario Games compete in the Canadian Senior Games. Several players from SWR (District 24) were medallists in the 2024 Games in Quebec City.

Hosting OTA Tournaments

A total of 7 tournaments for adult players were hosted by SWR clubs. Of these, five small-scale events were hosted by Hillfield-Strathallan and one by Burlington TC. They provided players an opportunity to develop ratings based on World Tennis Number as well as OTA ranking points.

The final OTA tournament of the year was hosted by The Club at White Oaks. It's part of the Circuit Ontario 1000-level series and offered \$6000 in cash prizes. It attracted 115 players and was played over five days between Christmas and New Year's.

Events for Junior Players

- ICTA Junior League : team play for junior players is organized by the Inter-County Tennis Association, with competition on Saturdays in May and June. Participating SWR clubs : Halton Hills, Milton, Aldershot, Appleby, Burlington. Operated by Todd Orrett, ICTA Junior Convenor.
- Tennis Rocks is a multi-club team-tennis event for junior players. It's a one-day event hosted by the Burlington TC and directed by Bruce Cates in collaboration with the ICTA Junior Convenor.
- A total of 117 tournaments for junior players were hosted by SWR clubs as part of the OTA Junior Calendar. These events make it possible for families to find events for young players without travelling into the GTA.

Host clubs included Cedar Springs, Milton, Burlington, Hillfield-Strathallan, Grimsby, Niagara Academy of Tennis, The Club at White Oaks, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Welland. Beginning in September, Milla Matsko created the Prime League for the purpose of identifying available court time and developing tournament directors. She introduced new venues at Ridley College and Brock University in St Catharines, and at Rosedale TC in Hamilton.

- In June, the Milton TC hosted the Ontario U12 and U16 Provincial Championships. Also in June, the Club at White Oaks hosted an ITF (International) Junior Tournament, and was awarded special recognition by the ITF for hosting excellence.

Coaching & Officials Development

- An Instructor Certification course was held at Niagara Academy of Tennis in Vineland in April, with 14 young candidates.

Player Development

A considerable number of players from SouthWest Region play in provincial, national and international competitions, some winning championship titles. Whenever possible, these are noted on the SouthWest Region website. Definitive listings are difficult to come by from our provincial data, in part because of

various methods of identification. We define a player as from SWR if their home address is within the Region. It's not uncommon, however, for players to receive coaching and training in multiple locations, some of them located in other regions, and sometimes this is how they're identified. We also have players training in SWR locations, but resident in other regions.

Ideally, as World Tennis Number becomes more widespread and reliable, and as players are identified by a home postal code, we'll be able to have more comprehensive listings of player achievement across the region. We'd like to recognize the success of local players and celebrate their progression.

We have two universities within SouthWest Region, with men's and women's teams competing in annual OUA competition. Brock University plays home matches at Youngs Sportsplex in Welland, while McMaster University plays at Stoney Creek TC. Meghan Mazer of McMaster was awarded Coach of the Year at the OUA championships in October.

A target for improvement is in the area of Masters Tennis. This category includes all players from the age of 30 onwards, with divisions for men and for women in increments of five years. If we can create a formula for competition in compact time periods, a large number of players would be able to access match play at their own playing level and age.

Masters Tennis is the fastest-growing segment of international competition. It provides players with the fun of destination travel with a tennis component. ITF tournaments will be feasible for a greater number of players if we provide a regional circuit for accumulating experience and building a rating.

In the pick-a-ball department, we have two games of Spec(tacular) Tennis each week in Niagara, and there are two new padel courts at Blue Zone Courts in Burlington.

Looking ahead to 2025

Along with a continuation of all from above, the Region will focus on networking and connections. Three specific categories are targeted :

- A Coaches Roundtable. Our tennis directors and club pros are a vital part of our club activities and play a significant leadership role in partnership with club volunteers. A regular network system will encourage craft-sharing and foster collaboration and cooperation among the region's clubs.
- Networking and mentorship for women and girls. Equity remains a high priority for tennis in Canada. Creating a system for connecting women coaches and female players will encourage sharing and support, with the goal of achieving more and better opportunities for growth and achievement.
- Connecting families with young players. Navigating the Long-Term Athlete Development Plan is a significant challenge for families. Networking will foster experience-sharing as well as encouraging constructive feedback.

- Continuing the conversation. At the AGM in November, the group interactions were spirited and enlightening. At the end, a question was brought forward : How do volunteers get involved in SouthWest Region? In response, beginning on January 5th, open zoom sessions are scheduled for Sunday mornings at 10:00. Participation by anyone interested in tennis in the region is welcome.

The Website

Creating a new website for SouthWest Region was the major undertaking of 2024. Its goal is to provide a foundation for the Region ... a shared body of knowledge. It should answer a lot of questions : WHO is doing WHAT and WHERE. The bigger questions of HOW and WHY should find their way in eventually as well.

It's a slow process, not an easy fit in a social climate in which "slow" is uncommon and not particularly valued.

How do we answer the question : "what is the SouthWest Region all about"? The website chooses to respond according to the premise : "the big picture is hiding in the details". As we gradually add more detail, the hope is that readers will find a picture to match their individual tennis experience, and thus see themselves as part of a tennis world with boundless possibilities.

One part of the website deserves particular attention, that being the tribute to Stacey Allaster in the LIBRARY section. Stacey's tennis story has roots in SouthWest Region at the Welland Tennis Club, from where she evolved to become a superstar of the first order in the world of tennis. The story is inspiring, but also informative for conversations about growing the game of tennis here today. The objective is not only to admire Stacey, but to learn from the insights she shares and use those lessons to our advantage. I encourage everyone to set aside half an hour to read about Stacey Allaster. This example of her experience is from the final paragraph of the final item on the Stacey menu :

Q. What advice would you give to someone who's about to move from chief operating officer to chief executive?

A. I've had that experience. I thought I knew what the C.E.O. role was when I was a C.O.O., but as I prepared before the interview process, I engaged a C.E.O. coach. I can remember that in the early days of preparing, I said to the coach, "It's a natural transition for me to go from C.O.O. to C.E.O."

She said: No, it's not. It's not a natural transition. In the operating role, you're very focused on the day-to-day, the tactical, to get the job done. At the C.E.O. level, you're going to step back. It's going to be about strategy. It's going to be about your vision. It's going to be about values. It's going to be about people. It's going to be about you making sure you've got the right course and the right team, and that they're energized and motivated. It's an entirely different thought process.

Applying this to SouthWest Region : both the COO function and the CEO function are a collective. We work as individuals and teams to accomplish projects, to get operational jobs done. And those other things Stacey talks about - strategy, vision, values; becoming energized and motivated : they're the product of conversations across the entire spectrum of tennis in SWR. And that's what the website is for.

Donna Singer-Wood

The website is also a tribute to the values of a tennis player named Donna Singer-Wood. When Donna died in 2021, she left \$10,000 to the Ontario Tennis Association. This legacy has been allocated to the startup costs for the SWR website.

A career flight attendant, Donna moved to Burlington from Montreal in 1993, and became a very active participant in the tennis community. She served in several positions on the executive of the Burlington TC, loved to compete in tournaments and leagues, and played in Arizona during the winter months.

- She was a scrupulous note-taker and record-keeper, seeing the value of the present being informed by the past. We hope she'd approve of the role the website plays in this capacity, including the SWR 1996 annual report which was part of her collection.
- She was a lifelong learner and saw every tennis encounter as an opportunity to try something new and gain a fresh insight.
- She was warm and welcoming and inclusive. Carol Victor shares this appreciation of Donna:

Donna was my first real "friend" contact at the Aldershot Tennis Club. Having been a member of a tennis club in Toronto, I knew how cliquey tennis could be, so having someone reach out to me, as a newcomer to Burlington, was so appreciated. It's not easy to leave a city that has been your home for 40 years. As a southpaw she had some unusual skills and we were good partners for each other, especially against our formidable opponents : the 2 Tony's ... both hers and mine. We played several sets on weekends followed by margaritas and pizza.

Donna loved tennis. She played an aggressive game with unabashed confidence. She was up on all the professional standings and stats, priding herself in this knowledge. She was equally well versed on her opponents and to say that she took the game seriously is an understatement.

Our friendship blossomed over our love of the game, along with music and reading. I miss her every time I find myself in need of a friend just to hit with or to enjoy a friendly doubles game. She left us too early, but with memories that will never be forgotten.

The 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

The annual gathering of SouthWest Region was convened on Sunday November 24th at 10:00am, in the banquet hall of the Tyandaga Golf Course in Burlington.

We were a total of 50 participants, 45 from SouthWest Region, including special guests Wayne Saigeon (past SWR chair), Michel Lecavalier (past OTA board chair) and Tony Schafer (past OTA board chair). Five were featured resources and guests : Richard Mainella (OTA president & CEO), Andrew Chappell (OTA manager, membership & region development), Arun Prasad (OTA board member), Todd Orrett (ICTA board member) and Jennifer Weerasinghe (PhD sociology student at York University and expert in club management).

We divided into groups to discuss shared interests.

Optimum club management - operations software, challenges and success stories, supports from OTA/TC

Inter-club activities and team play - expansion and development

Systems and collaborations for our youth - what is needed beyond club lessons and activities? Who? How?

Communications - where are the gaps? what can we do better?

Hosting multi-club events - regional, provincial, national, international : why? how?

Facilities maintenance and upgrades - relations with municipal authorities; access to grants [11 club presidents had the benefit of an hour with Richard Mainella to build connections]

The objective of the gathering was to build a sense of region identity, such that individuals and clubs feel a kinship with others in similar circumstances. In such an environment, vexing problems and creative solutions can be shared, collaborations established, and successes celebrated. Each participant made an important contribution to SWR by showing up and being open to sharing their own ideas while also listening to those of others.

The groups held their conversations without a designated facilitator and without a request to make notes. Each delegate was provided with a notepad and pen, on which it was intended for everyone to write down some words of reflection or comment on the day. We regret that we failed to ask for this.. Next year we'll do better!

Special thanks to Dot Knight and Anne Luxon, our welcoming and management team; to our president & CEO Richard Mainella for his formal message and informal conversations; and to Andrew Chappell for assembling a collection of branded merchandise for draw prizes, and for bringing helpful resources. The event was made possible by all the volunteers who drove considerable distances and gave up most of a day to share and to connect. We're grateful to each and all.

Attached are the chair report and financial summary presented at the meeting.



The question is often asked : What does it mean to be SouthWest Region Chair?

There are essentially two components. One is to lead Region-wide efforts to “promote and develop tennis” ... to “broaden participation in organized tennis” ... and to “strengthen club and regional structures” within our geographic area (Halton, Hamilton, Niagara, Haldimand-Norfolk). The second is to serve as a member of the OTA board of directors.

Election as Chair takes place ideally before the end of each year, though there’s sometimes a rollover to the early months of the year following. (Our 2023 meeting was in January 2024.) At the following OTA AGM in April, the Region Chairs are formally appointed to the OTA Board.

The OTA Board is comprised of a 7-member Executive Committee (Chair, Past Chair, four Vice Chairs and the CEO/President), as well as the 10 Region Chairs. The Board has 7 regular meetings per year : February, March, May, June, September, November, December. They normally take place on Saturday mornings from 9:30 - 1:00 in the boardroom at the National Tennis Centre. For the past two years, the November meeting has been a full-day along with preceding evening. There’s also a brief meeting after the OTA AGM in April. In addition, Board members attend Presidents Day at the NBO (August) and the DSA Presentation Dinner (October).

The Board has a standing committee called the Regional Council, comprised of the Vice-Chair Membership & Regional Development and the 10 Region Chairs. It has been meeting online on a Monday evening prior to each Board meeting.

The Nominating Committee is another standing committee, this one comprised of the Past Chair and the 10 Region Chairs. It meets online as many times as needed to provide a slate of candidates for the Executive Committee positions in advance of the OTA AGM in April.

All directors serve without remuneration, and sign a declaration that they serve without receiving any profit either directly or indirectly from the position.

Region Chairs and the Board’s Vice-Chairs serve terms of one year, thus require re-election annually in order to continue in their positions. Actual elections for any of these positions are rare. Most often, there is only one nominee and the election process is a formality. The call for nominations is made up to 60 days before the meeting, and nominations close 20 days before the meeting. Your two SouthWest Region nominees for 2025 are : Chair - Rosemary Goodwin, and Treasurer - Steve Knight.

This will be my 4th term. In the first year (2022) we hosted the Canada Summer Games. The second year (2023) saw us host the celebration tour of the Davis Cup. And this year (2024) we hosted the celebration tour of the Billie Jean King Cup. So far, 2025 has no such blockbusters on the books, but we look forward to it being the best year yet. Our time spent together here today lays the groundwork for all that’s to come.



Bank balance at December 31 2023	\$ 4,651.62	
Received from OTA budget re 2023	3,175.00	7,826.62
<i>Expenses for 2023 AGM (held January 20,2024) :</i>		
Cedar Springs room rental	565.00	
Catering	3,640.00	
Facilitator's supplies	281.40	(4,486.40)
<i>Disbursements re 2024 operations :</i>		
Initial website hosting	67.77	
Administration expense re bank account	136.28	
Bank charges	48.00	(252.05)
<i>Expenses for 2024 AGM (held November 24,2024)</i>		
Tyandaga Golf Club room rental (440 +13%)		(497.20)
Catering		(2,613.56)
Received from OTA budget re 2024		3,500.00
Available for allocation at December 31 2024		<u>\$ 3,477.41</u>

Financing for the SouthWest Region website (southwestontariotennis.ca)

The impetus for the website began at the 2023 SWR meeting on January 20 2024. The project began on a volunteer basis, with Robin Smith providing the technical side, and Rosemary Goodwin providing the content side. WordPress was chosen as the comprehensive and flexible platform and the domain name was registered.

After several weeks of work, it became apparent that the missing ingredient was design expertise. Cu Van Ha (<https://cuative.crd.co/>) was approached on the basis of previous work done together and the website gradually began to take shape. After months of work, we finally launched on May 8th.

We had a basic Home page, a directory of Clubs, a Stories section with a format for making regular additions, an Events section with a listing of all the tournaments in SWR along with an explanation of the Junior structure, a Library section with a format for adding archival material. We sketched out two additional sections : Team Tennis and We're Here to Help, both of which are yet to be developed.

At each step of the way, Cu reinforced the technical side, ensuring that we had a robust foundation in which multiple formats could be delivered and optimized equally well on phones-tablets-laptops. In October, a performance issue led us to relocate the website from HostPapa to GoDaddy, and we now have that hosting for the next year.

This isn't an out-of-the-box template-driven website. It's set up to be adaptive, flexible and evolving. It provides us with a home base, a tangible presence for SWR, a vehicle for connection and visibility, a showcase of our objectives and our culture. It's more than marketing, more than information.

The total process has required hundreds of hours of work. While my time is volunteer, the design work is professional and requires compensation. Even at a very generous friends-and-family rate, this has accumulated to a substantial amount.

The OTA staff offered us the option of allocating the Donna Wood legacy of \$10,000 to the costs of the website. This has been accepted, with the hope it's something she would have appreciated and approved. Donna was very active at the Burlington TC and in all inter-club activities during the 1990s and beyond. She loved every aspect of tennis, was an avid student of the game, and was an intrepid note-taker and record-keeper. (Her partner, Tony Legault, has kindly passed on to us Donna's files and records from that time. We have her to thank for the 1996 SWR annual report in the website's Library.)

Since that initial amount, costs for continuing to build the website are at least \$1000 per month. I'd like to propose we allocate \$3000 of the SWR 2024 budget for this purpose and another \$3000 from the 2025 budget.

Guest List : 2024 SouthWest Region Annual Gathering

Adam Kolodziej	SWR Juniors
Alex Bittermann	Halton TA; Lakeshore League
Amalia Trusca	Milton TC
Andrew Chappell	OTA Manager, MRD
Andrew Zucker	Ancaster TC
Anne Luxon	SWR Team
Arun Prasad	Chair, North Central Region
Bill Pinto	Fort Erie TC
Bruce Cates	SWR Team
Carol Victor	Hamilton TC; photos
Chris Richard	Welland TC; St Catharines TC
Christina Wilson	Burlington TC
Dan Cibic	Halton Hills TC; SWR Juniors
Dave Scott	Rosedale TC
Debra Sylvester	Dundas TC
Dmitry Stakhov	Cedar Springs; competition systems
Dot Knight	SWR Team
Ghalib Riaz	Milton TC
Garry Bedford	North Burlington TC
Giovanni Rodriguez	The Club at White Oaks
Helen Donohoe	Burlington & Hamilton District League
Helen Welsh	Hilltop TC
Jennifer Weerasinghe	North York TC
Joel Cruz	SWR Juniors
Laurie Abell	Aldershot TC
Leanna Carpino	Halton TA; Wallace Park TC
Li Rao	Aldershot TC
Michel Lecavalier	Distinguished Guest
Michelle Pilote	Pelham TC
Milla Matsko	Prime League; SWR Juniors
Mustapha Jamal	SWR Team
Nancy Lennard	Ancaster TC
Oliver Barkovic	SWR Team
Pat Moran	Port Dover TC; Over 55 League
Paula Sousa	Roseland Park CC; Nassagaweya TC
Peter Moulson	Wallace Park TC
Richard Mainella	OTA President & CEO
Rosemary Goodwin	SWR Chair
Robin Smith	Tyandaga TC

Ron Lonz	Hilltop TC
Ron Mauro	Grimsby TC
Scott Hurtubise	Niagara Falls Racquet Centre
Stefan Ruff	SWR Juniors
Steve Knight	SWR Treasurer
Tan Qureshi	Niagara Tennis Network
Teresa Butson	Welland TC
Todd Orrett	ICTA; Tennis Rocks
Tony Schafer	Distinguished Guest
Tudor Enache	The Bubble Club; Appleby TC
Ula Kolodziej	SWR Juniors
Wayne Saigeon	Distinguished Guest

