

Spring 2026



On The Ball: News From LI



Recognizing Greatness

Calendar

3/20 USTA Coaches Workshop @Sportime Port Washington

3/30-31 USTA National Annual Mtg. & Conf.

4/19 H.S. Coaches Clinic @Bethpage Park Tennis

4/26 Better Together Tournament @Roslyn H.S.

5/2 LI Special Olympics @Massapequa HS

6/13 Nassau Parks Family Tennis Day @Hempstead Lake State Park

7/7 Nassau Kid's Day @LuHi (Rain date 7/8)

8/3 Suffolk Kid's Day @Island Quest (Rain date 8/4)

Calendar continued on page 3

visit www.usta.com/longislandregion for details on all events

... follow us on Facebook: [Play Tennis Long Island](#) Instagram [USTA Eastern](#)

USTA Eastern held its annual Eastern Tennis Conference and Awards program in January. Long Island was thrilled to celebrate several of our own who were recognized for their achievements:

10 and Under Award: Kerri Jannotte-Hinkley accepted the award for Advantage All Tennis Foundation



At left, Jannotte-Hinkley is pictured with Eastern Conference special guests Bob and Mike Bryan, the most successful men's doubles team in tennis history. Photos below show Advantage All Foundation members and participants celebrating the Eastern award.



Family of the Year Award: Perez Family (see story and photos on page 6)

Junior Team Tennis Award: Samantha Siegel (Sportime Lynbrook)



Samantha Siegel

Louise Cilla Award: Dorothy Wiggins (photo, right). Dorothy, a 100-year-old tennis-lover and social media personality, still plays tennis at a club in East Hampton. Recently she performed the coin toss at the 2025 US Open match pitting Naomi Osaka and Coco Gauff.



Long Island Regional Volunteer of the Year: Dunja Froman

(below right, Froman, at center, is pictured with Ari Roberts, president, USTA Eastern, and Amber Marino, USTA Eastern Executive Director and CEO.

Additional photos from the USTA Eastern Conference and Awards evening can be found on Facebook at [Play Tennis Long Island](#).



USTA Eastern Announces Amber Marino as New Executive Director



The United States Tennis Association Eastern Section (USTA Eastern) Board of Directors has officially announced that Amber Marino will serve as the organization's Executive Director & Chief Executive Officer, effective immediately.

"We are thrilled to appoint Amber to this position," said USTA Eastern Board President Ari Roberts. "For more than two decades, Amber has established a robust, exemplary record in the tennis industry and in non-profit management, and through her work, she has consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to expanding access to the sport. Additionally, as a longtime USTA volunteer and former USTA Eastern board president, Amber acutely understands the local tennis landscape she will now oversee. She is exceptionally well qualified to lead USTA Eastern into an exciting future."

Marino joined the USTA Eastern staff in June 2025 in the role of associate executive director. From 2001 until 2025, she served as the executive director of 15-LOVE in Albany, NY. In this role she managed all aspects of the organization cofounded by Arthur Ashe that works to connect the sport with youth all across the Capital Region, particularly in underserved communities.

Concurrently, Marino sat on the USTA Eastern Board of Directors for five consecutive two-year terms, including serving as the governing body's vice president (2017-2019) and president (2019-21). In the latter position, she helped guide the section through the many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Marino has volunteered extensively with the National USTA, chairing the school/afterschool committee and serving on its nominating committee.

In all these capacities, Marino has played an instrumental role in the growth and development of local tennis for more than two decades. Now, as executive director, she will work in concert with the USTA Eastern Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, industry leaders and other stakeholders to further that growth and support the section's overall mission as well as the USTA's stated goal of increasing the number of American tennis participants to 35 million players by 2035.

"I am so excited to take on this role and work alongside the incredibly passionate USTA Eastern staff and volunteers," said Marino. "Through all my experiences in this industry I've witnessed firsthand the incredible power of tennis, how it can change lives for the better, and how it can make a positive impact on entire communities. That's what has always motivated me and what will continue to motivate me moving forward."

Marino replaces longtime former executive director Jenny Schnitzer, who retired from the organization at the end of 2025. The USTA Eastern Board of Directors officially announced Marino as Schnitzer's successor

at the section's annual Eastern Tennis Conference on January 30.



Marino holds a bachelor's degree in education from the College of St. Rose—where she also played tennis—and a master's degree in counseling and human relations from Villanova

University. She resides in Guilderland, NY with her husband, two sons and seven-pound maltese, Luna. In her spare time, she helps run a youth basketball league and still volunteers with 15-LOVE.

Rally For A Cure For Angelman Syndrome
IN HONOR OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

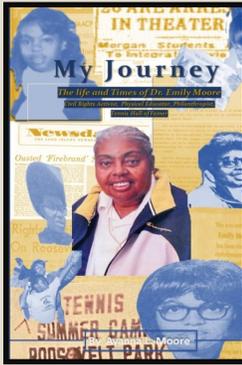
Bring the whole family on-court for casual tennis round robin play followed by pizza! Giveaways and prizes will be provided. Register: bit.ly/rallyforcolin

Date: May 2, 2026
Time: 4:30pm - 6:00pm
Where: USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center (Home of the US Open!)
Fee: Individual \$40 | Family (up to 4) \$60

Interested in sponsorship? Email Monica LaMura, mom of Colin LaMura, age two, who lives with Angelman Syndrome, at lamura@eastern.usta.com.

fast FOUNDATION FOR ANGELMAN SYNDROME THERAPEUTICS

Celebrating A Lifetime of Achievement: Dr. Emily Moore



The North Hempstead Democratic Club and USTA Eastern celebrated Dr. Emily Moore, an educator, longtime member of the USTA Long Island Regional Council and founder of Alliance Junior Tennis Development Program in Roosevelt, at a recent event in Hempstead. The celebration included a conversation with Dr. Moore and signing of her biography, "My Journey, The Life and Times of Emily Moore" by Ayanna L L Moore.

Dr. Moore, who was inducted into the USTA Eastern Hall of Fame in 2021, founded Alliance Junior Tennis in the 1970s. Through a variety of programs including after school tennis and summer camps, Alliance has introduced the sport to thousands of local kids in the Roosevelt area who otherwise would not have been exposed to tennis. Some of the program's more famous alumni include former basketball player Julius "Dr. J" Erving and actor/comedian Eddie Murphy.

For all her efforts, Moore has received a plethora of accolades. Arthur Ashe honored her with his Junior Tennis Development Award in 1988 and she received the Outstanding Citizen Contribution To Improve Education from the Martin Luther King Jr. Annual Honors. In 2015,

she was awarded an honorary doctorate degree from her alma mater, Morgan State University. She received the Hy Zausner Lifetime Achievement Award from the USTA Long Island Regional Council in 2006. For more information on Dr. Moore, [click here](#).

Black History Month Celebration

Advantage All Tennis held a Black History Month red ball event for juniors at Christopher Morley Tennis. This event was coordinated by Coach KerriAnn Jannotte and tennis team members from Roslyn High School, with support from USTA Eastern.



Calendar of Events/Continued

Boys' HS Season Highlights

5/9-5/10 Nassau Individual Singles/Doubles Tournament (5/16-5/17 Rain Dates)

Week of 5/25 Nassau Small Schools & Large Schools Team Finals

Week of 6/1 Small Schools LI Championship @Nassau site



Week of 6/1 Large Schools LI Championship @Suffolk site

6/5-6/7 NYSPHSAA Individual Singles/Doubles Championships @BJKNTC

6/12 NYSPHSAA Small & Large Schools Team Tennis Championships @NTC

Celebrating Lunar New Year

Advantage All Tennis NJTL held a Lunar New Year celebration at Christopher Morley Tennis with support from USTA Eastern. Coach KerriAnn Jannotte and several Roslyn HS tennis team members led the event. Toki Tennis provided shirts and other giveaways.



Tennis Participation Continues to Surge with Six Consecutive Years of Growth

The USTA in February announced that tennis participation in the United States increased by 1.6 million in 2025 to eclipse a new high of 27.3 million total players.

Since 2019, tennis participation in the United States has grown by 54 percent, adding nearly 10 million players over six consecutive years of growth. According to the independent study findings, the growth of tennis was driven by more play occasions, more players coming and staying in the sport, and strong momentum from play by women and communities of color.

“This sustained participation growth reflects strong demand for our sport across a diverse range of communities nationwide,” said Brian Vahaly, Chairman of the Board and Interim Co-CEO, USTA. “As we advance toward our goal of 35 million players by 2035, we will continue investing strategically to ensure this momentum translates into sustained participation and a stronger tennis ecosystem. Our goal is to expand access so more people across this country can play the world’s healthiest sport and experience the physical, mental and social benefits it has to offer.”

In addition to the significant overall participation growth, tennis showed strong performance across many key metrics in 2025*:

- **People are playing more often:** “Core players,” defined as individuals who played 10 or more times throughout the year, increased by 1.5 million to 14.5 million in 2025. This means that as overall participation has grown, so has the number of people that are regularly playing tennis, with more than half of all players (53 percent) considered “core players.” This increase also helped drive the **more than 616 million play occasions in 2025.**

- **Women were significant drivers of growth:** In 2025 1.1 million more women took to the court than in 2024, representing a 10-percent increase from 2024.

- **Participation among people of color experienced significant gains:** The number of Black/African Americans playing tennis increased by more than 450,000 (14 percent), Hispanic/Latino players were up more than 550,000 (12 percent) and Asian/Pacific Islander players grew by more than 260,000 (10 percent). All three of these groups represent greater percentage growth than the overall increase.

- **More first time players entered the sport:** Tennis recorded an uptick in new players entering the sport, with 4.9 million picking up a racquet for the first time – up 9 percent year over year.

- **Player retention rates are up:** Players also remained in the sport at a higher rate than in 2024, with 20.7

million players staying in the sport, up 10 percent (1.8 million additional players retained) in 2025. In addition, 1.7 million players returned to tennis after having been away from the sport for more than one year.

- **Unprecedented intent to play:** More than 25 million respondents that currently do not play tennis are very interested in playing the sport. This represents a strong subset of individuals that could shift to a playing population.

The complete 2026 U.S. Tennis Participation Report [can be found here.](#)



USTA Leagues Update

By Milly Keighery, Adult League Coordinator Long Island Region
(Keighery@eastern.usta.com)

The USTA Eastern Long Island Region has launched into 2026 with tremendous momentum, proving that even freezing temperatures and winter winds can't dampen the passion of our tennis community. From high-profile appearances to hard-fought sectional competition and the opening of Spring/Summer registration, the year promises to be an exciting one on the courts.

Eastern Tennis Conference

An early highlight was the annual Eastern Tennis Conference, where players, captains, coaches, officials and volunteers from across the section celebrated our tennis community and previewed the competitive season ahead.

The conference featured a special appearance by legendary doubles team Bob Bryan and Mike Bryan. The Bryan Brothers, whose accomplishments on the professional tour have cemented their legacy as one of the greatest doubles teams in tennis history, drew enthusiastic crowds and inspired players of all ages. Their presence created incredible energy and offered Long Island league players the rare opportunity to engage with Hall-of-Fame talent up close.

Beyond the star power, the conference continues to serve as an important early-season barometer for our region — a place where ideas are exchanged, best practices are shared and the foundation for the league year is strengthened. It was especially wonderful to see so many familiar local tennis faces. Our volunteers, captains, coaches, committee members and longtime players are the backbone of our programs; we are deeply grateful for your continued dedication to growing the game.

Tri-Level Sectionals

January's MLK Weekend brought intense competition as Long Island teams competed in the Men's and

Women's 4.5 Tri-Level Sectional Championships. These events consistently showcase some of the highest-level league tennis in the section.

On the men's side, Neil Hyman's team proudly represented Long Island, battling through challenging matchups with determination and resilience. For the women, Atara Simpson's squad brought focus, fight and tremendous team spirit to every court.

While neither team advanced to Nationals, both represented the region with pride. The level of play was fierce and the matches were contested tightly throughout the weekend. Congratulations to every player who competed — your commitment and sportsmanship exemplify the best of our league community.

65+ Competition

Long Island's depth of talent extends well beyond the younger age divisions. Our 65+ players continue to demonstrate that competitive spirit and athletic excellence have no age limit. Mary Alice Ruppert led her team to represent Eastern in the 65+ 6.0 division at the National Invitationals, while Lydia Eitel once again guided her team in the 65+ 8.0 division.

These prestigious invitationals bring together top-ranked teams from across the country, creating an elite and highly competitive environment within age-specific brackets. We extend heartfelt congratulations to both teams for representing Eastern and Long Island with such pride.

Mixed League

Back at home, the 18+ Mixed League season is reaching its dramatic conclusion. Standings across divisions have been incredibly tight, with multiple teams vying for top positions right up until the final matches. The 6.0, 7.0, and 8.0 divisions have already

launched into playoffs, where every match carries heightened intensity as teams compete for the opportunity to represent Long Island at Sectionals. As the 18+ Mixed season winds down, attention quickly shifts to the start of the 40+ Mixed League. Best of luck to all teams as the competition continues.

Spring/Summer Leagues

And now for what many have been eagerly awaiting — Spring/Summer League registration is officially open. Captains have begun registering teams and building rosters for what promises to be another outstanding season of league tennis. With offerings across Nassau and Suffolk Counties, both daytime and evening leagues provide flexibility for players balancing busy schedules. Whether you are a returning competitor or joining a league team for the first time, there is a place for you on the courts this season.

Leagues are available across a wide range of NTRP levels to ensure competitive and enjoyable match play for all abilities:

- **18+: 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5, 5.0**
- **40+: 3.0, 3.5, 4.0, 4.5**
- **55+: 6.0, 7.0, 8.0, 9.0**
- **65+: 6.0, 7.0, 8.0**

Captains are strongly encouraged to register early to secure their team's place, coordinate rosters and begin preparing for match play. For registration details or questions, please contact [Milly Keighery](mailto:Milly.Keighery@usta.com).

As we look ahead, it is clear that Long Island tennis continues to thrive at every level — from rising competitors to seasoned veterans, from local league play to national competition. We look forward to seeing you on the courts this Spring and Summer for another exceptional season.

Perez Family Recognized as Eastern Family of the Year



The Perez-Lopez family of Mount Sinai—Tito, Pilar and children Manuel, Sofia and Valentina—

have been named USTA Eastern's Tennis Family of the Year for serving as passionate champions of the sport in their corner of the world.

Tito is the general manager and director of tennis at Long Island Health and Racquet in Setauket. He and his wife are entrenched Long Island tennis volunteers, while all three children are competitive players who competed in USTA junior tournaments, including Junior Team Tennis (JTT). And all three have distinguishable personalities and approaches to the game, Tito says.

"All my kids have been given the same opportunity to train in tennis and compete," he explains. "But I respect that each one is different, and I'm very happy and proud of all of them."

The eldest, Manuel—who currently plays for the men's tennis team at Bentley University in Waltham, Mass.—is "a fighter," Tito notes. "You can see how much time and effort he puts into his training."

Middle child Sofia—who received a USTA Eastern Junior Sportsmanship Award in 2018—was "born to compete," says Tito. "A lot of people [wilt] in competition, but she's made for it. She can deal with her emotions on court...and she can put the pieces together in the middle of a match. That's not easy to do. I remember one day we were coming back from a tournament in New Jersey after she lost. She was sad, but then she said, 'Dad, you know what? I enjoy competing.' She was 12 years old."

Valentina is in the seventh grade and already on the varsity tennis team with sister Sofia. "She made the

county tournament," Tito says. "But what Valentina *really* made during the school tennis season was friends! She's friends with the whole team. She has the ability to make people love her, and I think that is what will make her successful as a person."

The siblings' love for and commitment to the game undoubtedly extends from their father, who grew up playing in Bolivia. Tito enjoyed the sport so much that he decided not to go to school for engineering and instead opened up an academy in his native country at just 19. Over time the academy gained much renown, with many of the players who trained there going on to compete on the international circuit. But it was still hard to make much money as an academy owner in Bolivia, and after they married, Pilar pushed Tito to look for work in the United States.

In 2007, Tito attended a PTR conference in South Carolina and within two weeks of landing in America received a job offer from what was then called World Gym Setauket on Long Island. He accepted the position and has served as a member of the staff at the facility ever since.

Over the years Tito has become heavily involved with USTA Eastern programs and initiatives, even serving on the organization's board of directors for two terms. He is particularly passionate about coaching juniors and fielded JTT squads that advanced to the sectional



tournament every year—and the national competition twice.

Recently, owing to Tito's new volunteer role on the National Diversity & Inclusion Committee, the family created and organized USTA Eastern's inaugural Hispanic Heritage Month Tennis Festival, held in October at the USTA BJK National Tennis Center. Attendees got to try tennis, meet special guest Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario and enjoy Hispanic culture, including food and dance performances.

"With this event it was important for me to connect my family with the community," he says. "Tennis has given to my family all these years, so it's important that we give back."

Pilar echoes this commitment to giving back, emphasizing the sense of belonging the sport has provided beyond the court. "What I value most about tennis is the profound sense of family it creates," she says. "On my journey as an immigrant, I found support and affection in people who, over time, became part of our great tennis community. Tennis gave us a family far larger than we ever dreamed of."





2026 USTA Eastern & LI Regional Grants Now Available

USTA Eastern and USTA Long Island are offering grants to help support your organization's tennis programming. Grant opportunities include:

[School Youth Tennis Initiative Grant](#) (up to \$1200) Deadline 11/13

[Region Grants](#) (up to \$1000) Deadline 11/13

[Growing Tennis Together](#) (up to \$5000) Deadline 4/3

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Calendar Observances Grant](#) (up to \$2000) Deadline 12/4

[Adaptive and Wheelchair Grant](#) (up to \$2000) Deadline 12/31

[Tennis Venue Services](#) (opportunity to get courts refurbished and more from USTA National)

Click on the links above to learn more about eligibility and requirements. If you would like to reach out to discuss your program, please contact Neil Thakur (thakur@eastern.usta.com).

Photo caption: With the assistance of a USTA Eastern grant, Aspiration Concepts Sports & Education NJTL began working with the Westbury UFSD last year to provide basic red ball tennis instruction to each of the district's four elementary schools.



USTA Eastern Long Island

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[Neil Thakur](#), USTA Eastern Manager of Long Island Region Schools & Community Tennis

We are committed to the promotion and growth of tennis, the "lifetime sport," for people of all ages and abilities to play and enjoy the game. Through the efforts of volunteers, USTA staff and strategic partners, we are dedicated to the highest standards of integrity, honesty and ethics in developing tennis programs in local communities throughout Long Island. Our mission will be served by having our youth, our adults and corporate partners enjoy the "sport for a lifetime."

On The Ball: News From LI is published quarterly by the USTA Eastern Long Island Region. Written and produced by Jacki Binder. Edited by Michael Pavlides. Founded by Daniel Burgess.