

OTTAWA TENNIS AND LAWN BOWLING CLUB

Continuity from generation to generation at the OTLBC

By Claire Brodie

Laval Fournier, a retired teacher from Glebe Collegiate who taught whole generations of Old Ottawa South children in his day, has been a member of the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club (OTLBC) since the 1990s. Long ago, he made it his mission to nurture a century-old hydrangea that was planted when the clubhouse was built in 1923. Today, the tree is old, gnarled and hollowed out by time; and yet, with Laval's loving care, it continues to blossom year after year. Laval is determined to keep that hydrangea going as a symbol of continuity at the club.

Continuity – from year to year and generation to generation – is a major fact of life at OTLBC. Some of the older members arrived here as very small children with their parents. They say that many of their earliest memories are of the club, and they are proudly carrying the tradition forward to their own children and grandchildren.

Stephanie McNeely and James Grant are relatively new residents in Old Ottawa South and members of the club, but they too were attracted by a sense of continuity. It is something they

Grove Avenue, is an example of that kind of engagement. He joined the club in the 1950s. During that time, he has been an active player and a tireless volunteer, at one time serving as president. When he stepped down from that role, the board of directors created an award in his name for volunteerism. Dave keeps a scrapbook of his life at the club that contains membership cards for every year dating back to 1960.

Mike Rollo is younger. He also grew up on Grove Avenue, and he joined the club as a child in 2000. An adult player today, he began as an avid junior. He was also an employee in his day, working as a camp counsellor and at the front desk. As a player, he advanced to be a club champion and is now an active member of the advanced adult group. Other members, who joined as singles and have also worked at the club, have married here and are now bringing their babies to the club in carriers. For them, the club is like a great big family.

And, as in any family, the generations intersect. Every Friday, Teresa Beaugard meets her father – he is 93 years old this year – for a game on Court 5. At the other end of the age spectrum, 15-year-old Anja



Laval Fournier pruning his beloved hydrangea in the fall.

PHOTOS BY MORGAN JOHNSON-DUGAY

their own children but as an extended family. The Hart children have been coming to OTLBC since they were little. They learned how to swim here. They play tennis or volleyball and celebrate family birthdays by the pool. His sister, Katie Hart, her husband, Neil McCormick, his parents and the McCormick children are also members. For years, this whole family has been hanging out together at the club, having fun and preserving and building strong, lifelong bonds.

It is all about connection. Maggie

Fawcett and Jen Small went to Glebe in their day, and Laval Fournier was their teacher. Today, they live with their young families in Old Ottawa South, and belong to OTLBC. “We live in this neighbourhood because of the life it offers us, including the tennis community,” says Maggie. “We want to belong to this club forever.”

Claire Brodie is the Event and Customer Service Manager at the Ottawa Tennis and Lawn Bowling Club.



The Grant family eating at the Cameron on the clubhouse balcony.



Jen Small and Maggie Fawcett, friends since high school.

want for their children, and they like the sense of being part of a long and continuing story. “The multi-generation aspect is part of what makes this place so special,” they say. “We feel we’re part of something much bigger than ourselves.” They have felt a part of OTLBC from the very beginning.

There is one club veteran, Robert Yip, who makes it his mission to welcome new members and to introduce them into the life of the club. The idea is to make sure that new members find the kind of experience they are looking for and that they happily engage for the long term.

Dave Fleming, who grew up on

Zimonjic works for the club on court maintenance, while her 13-year-old brother Jakob is a tennis member. He walks down to the club regularly with a basket of balls and spends hours practising. He plays tennis with his peers, of course, but he also regularly partners with people from his father's or grandfather's generation who he considers his friends. To encourage this trend, the club organizes a special event where parents put their racquets in a pile so that the kids can choose a grown-up partner at random.

Many members – Kimberly Banks Hart and Matt Hart, for example – experience the club not just with

CONSTRUCTION

ADCOR CONSTRUCTION & SONS

"Constructors of Distinction"

QUALITY
INTEGRITY
RELIABILITY

613-422-2128

www.adcorconstruction.com

THANK YOU FRONT LINE WORKERS!

Our clients' and staff's health and safety is of paramount importance. We follow all PPE rules, sanitise our hands prior to entering a site and do not socialize outside our immediate circles.