

THE COURT REPORTER

Newsletter of the Walnut Creek Racquet Club

January 2026



Cheers to

2026



Walnut Creek Racquet Club

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THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy January!

Happy New Year, my friends! I hope everyone is enjoying their holiday this season and was able to spend it with their loved ones. It was nice for me to be able to take some time away from not only work, but playing USTA tennis, actually. Personally, as someone who has played USTA League for over 20 years, I even get burnt out mentally at times from playing USTA, so it was a welcome break for me. Playing is still fun for me, though, so I still go out and play whenever I get the chance.



Garvin Tom
2025 WCRC President

With the New Year comes New Year's resolutions. What is your resolution? Do you have any? For me, I don't really believe in resolutions, quite honestly. I think if you care enough about making a change, you don't need to wait for the New Year to do it. You just do it (this is not a Nike advertisement, I promise you). However, there's no problem in setting goals for yourself at any time whatever that might be. A few years ago, I wanted to shed some weight, and through old fashioned diet and exercise, I'm 35 pounds lighter now. Today I still do cardio each day whether it's tennis or running, or even walking or stationary bike if the weather doesn't allow for the other two. I'm also doing weights and core workouts three times a week as well as controlling my calorie intake, and I look and feel better than I had three years ago. Having said that, there's no problem in making resolutions.

If you are making resolutions, I hope one of them is not to overdo it. In the past couple years, I've seen so many injuries, even by people in their 20's, that at times I think it's fitting that the hospital is just across the street from Heather Farm. If you feel fatigued or something doesn't feel right, take a break. I'll take a day off from working out from time to time if I need to. Tennis is a sport that involves unnatural body movements from torso rotation to wrist snapping. All that takes a toll, especially if they're not done properly, so keep that in mind. Just remember to listen to your body, and if it doesn't feel right, go ahead and take a break.

See you on the courts!

Garvin Tom



M EMBERSHIP

Welcome to Our 20 New Members
Current Membership: 1,130

Arguelles, Britni	Orinda	4.5	Hughes, Emma	Martinez	3.0
Bell, Melanie	Moraga	4.0	Jamshidnejad , Mandana	Alamo	2.5
Bernstein, Jamie	Alamo	3.0	Kan, Grace	Orinda	3.5
Bock, Courtney	Fairfield	3.5	Narayan, Srinika	Oakland	4.0
Calvert, Kendall	Concord	3.5	Patridge, Jean Ann	Danville	2.5
Carlstrom, Jill	Alamo	3.5	Rankin, Luanne	Danville	4.5
carr, susanne	Oakland	3.5	Saporito, Lisa	Pleasanton	3.5
Cohen, Robert	Oakland	3.0	Smith, Melissa	Alamo	4.0
Collins, Susan	St. Helena	4.0	Staehely, Erin	Walnut Creek	3.0
Green, Junko	Oakland	3.5			
Hansen, Susie	Alamo	3.5			



Membership questions contact:
Pam Maloney at 925-787-3970 or
email at: pam4tenis@gmail.com

NEW MEMBERSHIP RAFFLE

Each month a random draw
will pick a WCRC member's
name to receive free WCRC
membership for a year!

This month's winner is:

Dale Welsh



Tennis Coach Needed

Boys JV Coach at Las Lomas High School
Season opens Feb. 9th

**Position is volunteer or paid depending on
experience/level of commitment**

CPR certified, TB test & background check required

**Contact: Jimmy Huang at 925-698-5164
or jhuang916@gmail.com**

Settling in the New World and Welcomed by the Native Tennis Community:

Alex and Karen James

Interview and article by Ian McLaughlin

W CRC members/spouses Alex and Karen James are not only relatively new to the tennis community at Heather Farm, they just emigrated to the U.S. from the United Kingdom within the last several years as well, and the welcoming and inclusive community at the club has played an important role in helping to smooth their transition to a new country.

Alex is originally and proudly from South Wales but left at age 18 to attend university in Brighton, England, and met Karen after he completed his university studies there. Karen grew up in England and has been a lifelong equestrian, riding across the idyllic New Forest National Park in the English countryside. After university, Alex began working in the tech industry, after a number of companies throughout Europe, he eventually joined a company called Fivetran who were expanding into Europe.

As he climbed up the corporate ladder he was selected to run the company's global technical support team, which required a move to their headquarters in Oakland, California. Alex decided to move to the United States for his career, and Karen joined him, although a bout of Covid kept her quarantined in England for a while after Alex had already departed. Eventually she was able to join him in the United States, and the couple initially settled in Oakland.



Since both Alex and Karen were accustomed to the more pastoral settings which they enjoyed in their native Great Britain, they found Oakland and its intense urbanism a bit of a culture shock as they transitioned to a new country, so they decided to move eastward to Contra Costa County, which reminds them more of their homeland and allowed them to pursue the lifestyle they desire. The couple loves the Walnut Creek area and now live in Lafayette, with its similar suburban vibe and beautiful open spaces. While Karen grew up riding horses as an equestrian, Alex played a variety of sports in his youth, including rugby, which is Wales' national sport. But he didn't pick up

tennis until he was age 21 at university, and took to the game very quickly based on his wide-ranging athletic background.

Karen first stepped onto a tennis court around 20 years ago, taking a couple of lessons in the United Kingdom (Badgers Tennis Club in Brighton) after she and Alex had been dating for some time. Alex played so frequently that she wanted to see what all the fuss was about, and, quite frankly, to see him at all. Coming from a very different equestrian background, she wasn't immediately taken with the sport, and the British weather soon made playing consistently impractical, so tennis fell by the wayside.

It wasn't until they moved to the United States that everything changed. Karen began taking group classes at LifeTime with coach Kevin, where she quickly discovered a genuine love for



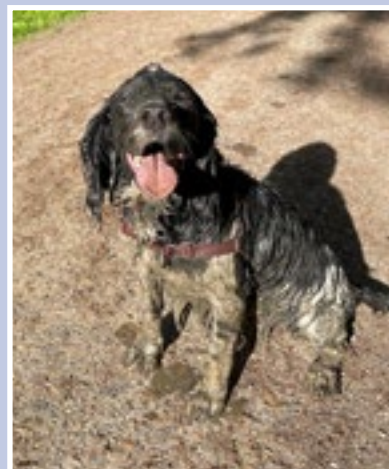
the game, often joking that tennis is simply too cold in the UK. She enjoyed Kevin's classes so much that she soon became a regular at Heather Farm, and, as so often happens, the club's welcoming and inclusive tennis community warmly embraced her. One day Tammie Snyder, who's very often at Heather Farm herself, noticed that Karen was also there with increasing frequency, pulled Karen out of the office to introduce her to Cara Mia Barnacascel, a prolific club presence and captain of many USTA teams. By that time Karen had been honing her tennis skills through Lifetime Activities' classes and had developed a fondness for the sport, so she took the leap and started USTA league play on Cara Mia's "Deuces Wild" team, the exact way so many club players at Heather Farm began their USTA careers. Meanwhile, Alex had already been playing in USTA leagues regularly through WCRC,



mainly on Tammie Snyder's and Steve Lehmer's teams. And although Alex is rated as a 4.5 player and Karen at 2.5, they often hit together and take classes from coach Kevin, whose style they both appreciate. That's a lot of tennis, and the couple each play five or six days a week now, so they're frequently found on the courts at Heather Farm since they both have a fondness for the game. During their joint interview for this article, both Alex and Karen echoed a sentiment shared by so many club members, that the friendly and welcoming tennis community we enjoy at Heather Farm is truly unique and has contributed immensely to their joy for the sport, but Alex and Karen have a unique perspective as expatriates. After moving away from their homeland and the friends and family they have in Great Britain, it's particularly meaningful to them that the community at Heather Farm is like a family to replace those they left behind. Alex cites a recent example when, after a session with coach Kevin, Karen walked off the court only to be serenaded with a surprise rendition of "happy birthday" by almost everyone at the club that day, in a group effort organized by Cara Mia and Karen's other "Deuces Wild" teammates. And even though Karen plays at a 2.5 level, Alex notes that there's no ranking discrimination at WCRC; every member is equally welcomed to revel in the camaraderie and joy

the game of tennis brings to those who love it regardless of their skill level or USTA ranking. One of Alex's favorite memories at the club was watching Karen play a competitive USTA match on court 4, the showcase court at Heather Farm, and watching the crowd's genuinely supportive reactions as they cheered on their fellow club member, and also watching Karen's joyful interactions with the crowd during a relatively high pressure environment with lots of spectators in a sport that was still very much a new passion for her. These are common and tangible examples of why the players at WCRC enjoy the tennis community we share, because it transcends the game itself and makes the experience at Heather Farm more of a family atmosphere than a just tennis club, with everyone supporting one another. For expatriates adjusting to life in a foreign land, that atmosphere has added significance, because tennis is often accompanied by a social event like dinner or drinks afterwards.

When they're not playing tennis, Alex and Karen are very busy pursuing their careers. Alex still manages the technical support team for Fivetran, and after a twenty year career in finance in



Karen and Alex James continued...



the United Kingdom, Karen started feeling burned out so she trained in the type of leadership coaching that she felt would have benefited her during her busy finance career, and she ultimately made a wholesale career shift by opening her own business as a leadership development coach. Her business, "Karen James Coaching", keeps her very busy while providing a valuable service to professionals who are enmeshed in stressful careers that require both deep technical expertise and leadership skills to manage other members of a team effectively.

Aside from playing lots of tennis and working, Alex and Karen enjoy exploring the United States and the bounty of activities and natural beauty our country offers. They take lots of road trips, and one of their goals is to visit as many states as possible; in just the few years they've been living in the U.S. Alex and Karen have already visited 17 of the 50 states, and Alaska is high on their list to visit next. One

of their road trips was to a dude ranch in Colorado, where Alex tried horseback riding for the first time, thinking that since Karen had tried to learn tennis (his passion) when they were dating, he'd try out one of her lifelong passions as a reciprocal gesture. He describes being atop a horse that he couldn't control very well as something so far out of his comfort zone that it was extremely daunting, so suffice it to say that Alex isn't planning to take up horseback riding as a new hobby. Karen does not have the opportunity to ride much anymore herself, because it's just too cost prohibitive here. But she's planning her own road trip next year to Wyoming with several of her girlfriends from the U.K., and surely she will have ample opportunity to ride on the trip.



Otherwise, Alex and Karen are assimilating into the Bay Area culture and enjoying the wide variety of activities available here along with Aubrey, their 11 year old English Springer Spaniel they brought with them from Great Britain. Aubrey is a hunting dog by nature so they don't bring her to the courts very often because if she spotted a goose she'd be on the hunt, but since Aubrey is now getting on in years she doesn't need or accept the amount of physical activity she did as a younger dog anyway. The couple also enjoy skiing in the Sierras, a sport Karen only recently took up but Alex has engaged in for much of his life. In short, they are an adventurous couple and like to explore new things, whether it's dabbling in music (Alex plays some guitar, Karen used to play the saxophone), scuba diving, attending a NASCAR race at the Sonoma speedway



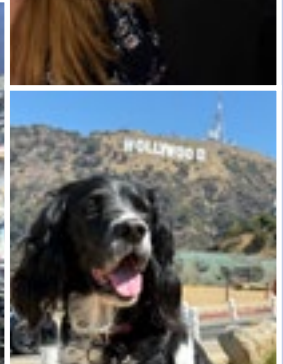
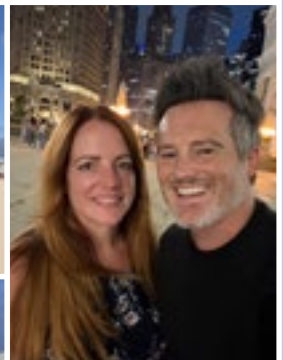
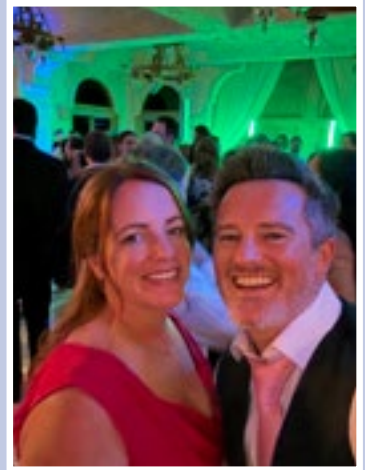
('Murica'), or wine tasting in our nearby wine country (although they have been talked into joining several wine clubs that have left them overstocked, as happens with so many people who visit our gorgeous local wineries and become intoxicated both by the wine and the beautiful atmosphere. During their many road trips, which were also frequent events for them in the United Kingdom, Alex and Karen have noted several cultural differences between our two countries when it comes to traveling, particularly because the United States is so large. Karen noted specifically that on a relatively short road trip in Great Britain one would typically pass through many cities, whereas in California especially it's possible to drive for hours and only pass through only a single town or two. And in the U.S., Karen notes, people think nothing of driving an hour or more to go somewhere for dinner, whereas if you travel for an hour to go somewhere in Great Britain, she says "you're staying for the weekend." Once one of Karen's friends from Britain told her that she'd be "in the area" and would like to get together, but

it turned out her friend was going to be in Newport Beach in Southern California, half a day's drive away. Her friend naturally assumed that since she was visiting the state where Karen lived that she'd be "in the area", which very often isn't the case in expansive California.

So Alex and Karen have been warmly welcomed by the tennis community at Heather Farm, in their new home country. But the surest sign that they've been welcomed as members of the WCRC family

was when tribal elder and their good friend Sean Barnacascel gave them their official nicknames, as he has done for nearly everyone he interacts with in the Heather Farm tribe; Sean dubbed Alex "easy peasy", and Karen "lemon squeezey", which roll off the tongue easily together since every celebrity couple needs either a portmanteau or rhyming nicknames that are convenient to use for the tabloids and paparazzi.

The cultural and ethnic diversity of the Heather Farm tennis community is one of its greatest strengths, and for recent British immigrants Alex and Karen James, the warm welcome they've received from the native tennis community at the club has helped them feel more at home as they've settled in the new world. ▲



Holiday Giving!

Our hearts are so full with the kindness and generosity of our community, friends and family. Today with a team of wonderful human beings and one puppy, we delivered 11 vehicles filled with 300+ wrapped gifts to two very grateful senior living communities. When a lot of people do something seemingly small the impact can be so incredibly large. Thank you for helping to make this possible, it's a gift we cherish each year.

Carissa Swanson & Jennifer Grant



Holiday Giving!

Just a quick update on our Adopt-a-Family for Christmas. Thanks to the generosity of about 30 team members, we were able to come together in so many meaningful ways—through financial donations (raising an incredible \$1,000!), shopping for gifts, and helping wrap and deliver presents. Because of this collective effort, we were able to support eight families this holiday season, including both single and two-member households.

I'm truly grateful for the amazing turnout and for all the ways our tennis team showed up to support those in need during the holidays.

A special thank-you to Deanna for connecting us with an organization to support after the tennis center no longer had families to adopt. Her prior experience working with Shelter, Inc. and her guidance on how best to partner with them was invaluable.

Wishing you all a wonderful and joyful holiday season!

— Cara Mia

A few pictures from the wrapping party



Holiday Giving!

The Spirit of Christmas

The spirit of Christmas was alive and abundant at the Walnut Creek Tennis Center. Lifetime Activities supported an effort by The Family Giving Tree to provide gifts for many who might otherwise have gone without. The effort was overwhelmingly supported by our tennis community and the Walnut Creek Racquet Club totaling 74 gifts, with many who pledged to provide even more next year!





Tennis News



Team Holiday Get Together

I just wanted to say thank you to everyone who came out, even though the weather didn't cooperate and we weren't able to play. I really appreciate you showing up and making the effort—it means a lot.

It was great to see everyone still able to socialize, relax, and enjoy each other's company despite the rainout.

Moments like that are a reminder of what makes this team so special. I'm really looking forward to a new year and another fun season together—on and off the courts!

(After Gibson's a few of us went to Calicraft to check out their new location on top of Va De Vi)

Thanks again, and see you all soon.

Cara Mia



OPERATING HOURS AT WCTC**January 2026****Monday – Friday: 8am-10:00pm • Saturday & Sunday: 8am-8pm*****New Year's Eve (Wednesday 12/31/25) we will be open from 8:00am to 12:30pm.******New Year's Day (Thursday 1/1/26) We will be closed all day.*****HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

We are excited to welcome you to another new year at the Walnut Creek Tennis Center. This year is shaping up to be an exciting time on the courts, and we look forward to serving you in 2026.

CONGRATULATIONS DECEMBER PASSHOLDER SPECIAL DRAWING WINNERS!

- ☐ Free Stringing Labor – Regina Hughes
- ☐ Free Four-Month Standard Pass – Runde Lu
- ☐ Free Annual Standard Pass – John Riley

JANUARY PASSHOLDER SPECIAL

Passholders, start the year off right with FREE Admission to Round Robins with the Pro on Friday, January 23rd! Pickleball will be at 5pm-6:30pm, and tennis will be at 6:30pm-8:00pm. Signups will open on January 7th at 10am for passholders and January 16th at 10am for non-passholders.

NEW USTA LEAGUE RESOURCES FOR 2026

For league players and captains, stay up to date on league rules, regulations, and helpful resources for play using the links below:

2026 USTA League Regulations (ULR + LLAR): <https://drive.google.com/file/d/11OQibnu1AJINe8l6YoE9JVqir37EtRv7/view>

Rules FAQ for NorCal Teams and Players: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XCuTm_TYUtxo-CHDK3LQ4OLVvoYgXbH4/view

League Match Rules & Etiquette: <https://www.usta.com/content/dam/usta/sections/northern-california/norcal/pdfs/leagues/resources/rules/league-match-etiquette-trifold-january-2025.pdf>

WINTER SESSION

Spots are still available in our Winter Session Youth and Adult Programs. [Check out available classes, and secure your spot today!](#) In addition, be on the lookout for drop-in options for our Doubles Strategy, Drill and Play, and Cardio specialty classes as well as our Intermediate and Advanced tennis classes.

WINTER COURT REMINDERS

During inclement weather, court conditions can change rapidly. Lifetime Activities staff will determine court playability onsite during inclement weather.

For **USTA and League Matches**, only the Home Team Captain, Co-Captain, or designee shall call the office to check court conditions. Matches cannot be canceled more than 3 hours prior to match start time. Daytime matches starting earlier than 11am may call the office at 8am to check court conditions.

For **open play reservations**, the reservation holder will be notified via email by CourtReserve of any cancellations once courts are determined unplayable for the reservation time. If you have an open play reservation that you wish to cancel ahead of time, please do so no less than four hours prior to the reservation start time.

Visit us online at www.lifetimeactivities.com or stop by the the office at 1751 Heather Drive. Please call with any questions at 925-945-0105 or 925-945-1102.

CALENDER OF EVENTS

2026

Jan Feb Mar Apr

Jan 5	USTA 40+ Season Opens
Jan 5	USTA 40+ DT Season Opens
Jan 5	USTA 18+ Mixed Season Opens
Jan 5	USTA 65+ Team Registration Closes
Jan 19	USTA 55+ Team Registration Opens
Jan 19	USTA 18+ Team Registration Opens
Jan 19	USTA 18+ DT Team Registration Opens
Jan 24-26	USTA 65+ DT Nationals
Feb 2	USTA 65+ Season Opens
Feb 17	USTA 55+ Team Registration Closes
Feb 17	USTA 18+ Team Registration Closes
Feb 17	USTA 18+ DT Team Registration Closes
Mar 13	USTA 40+ DT Season Closes
Mar 14-16	USTA 55+ Mixed Nationals
Mar 15	USTA 40+ Season Closes
Mar 15	USTA 18+ Mixed Season Closes
Mar 16	USTA 55+ Season Opens
Mar 23-27	USTA 40+ DT Playoffs Round 1
Mar 26-29	USTA 18+ Mixed Playoffs Round 1
Mar 30-Apr 3	USTA 40+ DT Playoffs Round 2
Apr 2-5	USTA 40+ Playoffs Round 1
Apr 2-5	USTA 18+ Mixed Playoffs Round 2
Apr 6	USTA 18+ Season Opens
Apr 6	USTA 18+ DT Season Opens
Apr 6-10	USTA 40+ DT Playoffs Round 3
Apr 14	WCRC - Summer Singles League Opens
Apr 9-12	USTA 40+ Playoffs Round 2

TREASURER'S REPORT

Cara Mia Barnacascel

January - November, 2025



Income

Total for League Dues	\$5,170.66
Membership Dues	24,342.05
Miscellaneous Income	62.38
Total for Tournament Dues	\$5,311.77
Total for Income	\$34,886.86
Gross Profit	\$34,886.86

Expenses

Board Meeting	1,268.12
Board appreciation dinner	\$962.34
Captains Meetings	1,256.61
Contract Labor	641.12
Contributions	500.00
Equipment	221.76
Gifts	486.10

League Expenses

Fall Mixed League Expenses	\$4,409.93
Summer Singles Expenses	\$974.75
Winter Doubles Expenses	\$2,082.06
League Expenses	\$7,466.74
Nationals Fee	1,424.00
Office Supplies	262.38
Total for Printing and Reproduction	\$99.99
Rental Fees	0.00
Total for Repairs	\$3,655.16
Sectionals Fees	3,300.00
Software	857.92
Supplies	1,331.20
Taxes	25.00
Tax Preparation	335.00

Tournament Expenses

Calcutta Expenses	\$12,655.62
Mid Summer Tourny Expenses	\$1,102.10
Total for Tournament Expenses	\$13,757.72
Website	1,177.50
Total for Expenses	\$39,028.66
Net Operating Income	-\$4,141.80
Net Other Income	
Net Income	-\$4,141.80

Balance November 30, 2025	\$57,227.75
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Calcutta Party/Auction	May 1, 2026	Summer Doubles League	Apr 14 - Sep 7, 2026
Calcutta Tournament	May 2, 2026	Summer Singles League	May 1 - Sep 7, 2026
Longest Day Tournament	June 20, 2026	Fall Mixed Doubles	Sep 1 - Feb 18, 2027
Mid-Summer Tournament	Aug 1, 2026		

55+ 8.0 Mixed Team



Tammie Snyder and Steve Lehmer's 55+ 8.0 mixed team come up just short at Sectionals.

After taking all three matches 2-1, our team met up against Broadstone in the semi-finals and squeaked out another 2-1 victory. In the finals, we met up against Cubberley which was the team to beat. All three lines went to 3 sets with Sandra and Steve knocking out 13-0 Brian Heimbecker! We came up just short in the stb but another amazing run. (16 players participated at sectionals)

Thanks to Steve Lehmer who stepped in and captained the semi's/finals as I got vertigo late Saturday night, and had to go home early. Luckily, we get to give it another run next year since we don't have to split up!! (which is the best part about losing at sectionals)

Additional congratulations to team members Sandra Harris and Darien Lum who's 55+ 7.0 mixed team (Wild Soju Aces) from Pleasanton will be heading to Nationals!

pictured: Darien Lum, Mike Lee, Steve Buchholz, Athena Lofquist, Glenn Teixeira, Steve Lehmer, Darcy Beauchemin, Peter Sullivan, Audra Lutter, Heidi Belton, Sandra Harris and Sureh Bhat.

Not pictured: Nancy Deschane, Nga Gross, Christine Hohenstein, Lloyd Hohenstein, Janell Mollenhauer, Laurie Radanovich, Justin Snyder, Tammie Snyder and Arnold Soleta