

ADULT TENNIS PROVIDER OF THE YEAR

Sets in the City Southwest

A big key to getting people playing tennis today is that time spent on court can't just be a night of instruction or formal play, bang a few balls, then head home. It's about making and creating a memorable, social tennis experience that makes participants want to return.



That was the inspiration for Sets in the City Southwest, a weekly co-ed league in four cities focused on 18- to 39-year-olds. It's been one of the best examples nationally of how

to reach out to young adult players, and it's the inaugural winner of *Tennis Industry's* Adult Tennis Provider of the Year Award.

"In the past year or so, more than 60 social tennis leagues have sprung up across the country," says Marilyn Sherman, USTA National Promotions Manager, Adult Tennis. "Sets in the City Southwest is doing it right and doing it with a social focus."

Up from 40 participants and a single site in the first season in Phoenix in 2014, Sets in the City has since

expanded to Tucson, El Paso and Albuquerque and had over 500 participants. Numerous friendships (and even a few romances) have been forged through the program, and host facilities have found an uptick in their businesses from participants seeking extra clinics and play opportunities.

"We just try to make it as fun and social as possible," says Sets in the City co-creator and USTA Southwest staff member Laura Stussie. "That's our thought process: 'How do we make this unique and fun?'" —*Jeff Sikes*

Tips For Success

- Relentless promotion and marketing through social media and email, then deliver program well and let word of mouth take over.
- Change the vibe and feel of your marketing sales pitch for younger generations. Language and tone are important. Keep it conversational, off-the-cuff, humor-filled and energetic.
- Themed days, costumed days, music playing and beverages flowing makes for a lively atmosphere players enjoy.
- Social experience afterward is a must.