

2019 ANNUAL REPORT



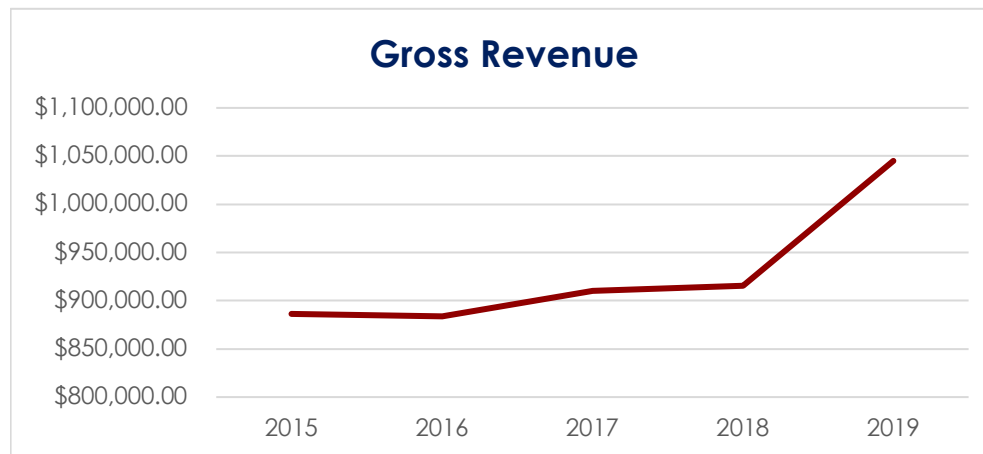
*Approved by the MWSRA Board of Directors
May 12, 2020*

PROGRESS IN 2019

GROWING IN THE REGION

Since 1956, MWSRA has provided dedicated soccer referees for a range of competitive youth (U8-U19), scholastic (middle – high school), and adult leagues and tournaments throughout the Washington, DC metro area. In addition to our continued Maryland partnerships in Montgomery County, Prince George's County, and Howard County, MWSRA increased its presence with new contracts and game assignments in Maryland and in Washington, DC – surpassing \$1 million in gross revenue for the first time in at least 30 years and over 11,300 games officiated. 97% of MWSRA's revenue pays our referees and assignors – only 3% is retained for administration and programming.

The biggest takeaway from this report, especially given the uncertain, long-term impacts of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on regional and youth soccer, is that MWSRA is in a stronger position than ever to be able to support our leagues and referees once operations resume.



WHAT'S NEW?

- ❖ MWSRA debuted its official rebrand in 2019, with a refreshed logo, new website, and a new awards program redesigned to cut costs and reward merit, not solely length of service.
- ❖ MWSRA redesigned its main website, mwsra.org to be smartphone-friendly and to make all league rules easily accessible.
- ❖ MWSRA formed a partnership with the University of Maryland Intramural Officials Program to better connect referees already in the local pipeline to regional referee opportunities.

Our Emphasis on Professionalism & Retention

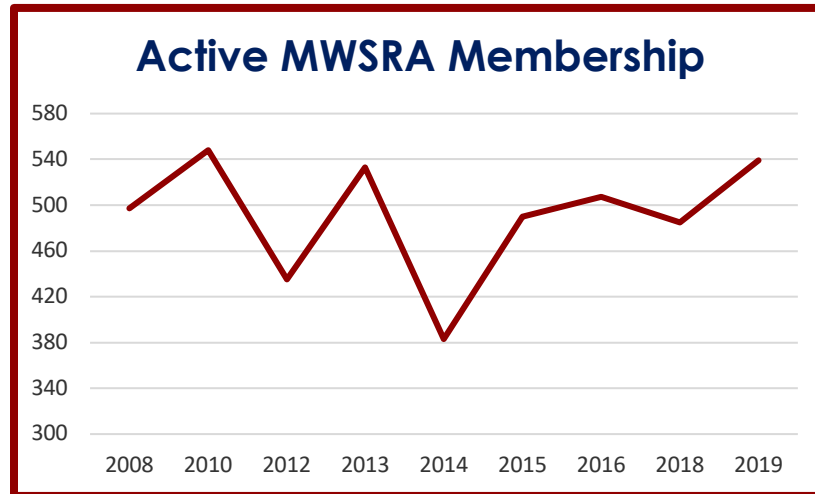
In 2019, MWSRA made particular efforts to advance its explicit commitment to two guiding principles that continue to guide our goals and initiatives:

Professionalism is of the essential, not just because this is a job, but in ensuring the safety, fairness, and enjoyment of the sport for all involved and earning the trust and respect of spectators, players, and coaches.

Retention is not only essential to sustaining MWSRA as a quality, healthy, and reliable organization, but also to building a collegial community among referees and address the regional shortage of referees.

ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESSES IN 2019

MWSRA's active membership has been on the rise since 2014 after inconsistent fluctuations between 2008 and 2014. 2019 capped that increase with the highest level of active referees of 539 since 2010. This is likely due to MWSRA's growing client leagues and a range of initiatives described below to promote recruitment and retention:



New Referee Recruitment Efforts

In Fall 2018, MWSRA launched its Recruitment & Development Committee (RDC), chaired by board member Fran Gavelli. In March 2019, the committee reached out to 142 newly certified Maryland referees in our region with a tailored recruitment message. Email analytics indicated that we had a 61% open rate, which is a positive sign for our first communication effort to a new batch of referees with no prior MWSRA affiliation.

In August 2019, the committee recommended that MWSRA increase its outreach and attract referees from college and university intramural programs in the area. In August 2019, MWSRA met with the University of Maryland (UMD) Intramural Officials Program to better connect referees already in the pipeline to regional referee opportunities. One key finding was that intramural officials were trained but not USSF-certified. MWSRA worked with UMD and the state instruction program to host a new referee clinic on-campus in College Park on March 1, 2020.

Updated MWSRA Awards Program

After decades of operating under an outdated and costly awards program, MWSRA leadership reinvented the awards program to better align with the organization's goals. Three categories of awards now exist: top ten first-year merit awards, length of service awards, the meritorious service award, and MWSRA's virtual [Hall of Fame](#). The awards program is more versatile and fitting for a diverse, multi-generational, modern organization. This restructuring also significantly reduces long-term, awards-related expenses for MWSRA, with initial estimates for all new awards at more than 52% less than current costs for solely the previous 15 and 20 year awards each year. The exception here are 2019 award expenditures, which both accommodated the final year of grandfathering in the old awards system and bulk ordering new awards for the next 5 years. These cost savings will be reinvested into MWSRA's referee retention efforts.

Supporting Female Referee Development

MWSRA continued to lead a regional effort to support female referee development. A referee survey of 176 responses, coupled with individual interviews with female referees around the region, has informed 12 distinct recommended actions for the Maryland Referee Committee, assignors and associations, and individual referees to take to create a more welcoming, constructive environment for female referees. In May 2019, MWSRA President Matthew Popkin and MWSRA board members Fran Gavelli and Mary Ramirez de Arellano led discussions with the CASRA President, two other female referees in the region, and the Maryland Referee Committee to share the recommendations. Following this meeting, MWSRA sent a list of our top 3 priority recommendations for the committee to embrace:

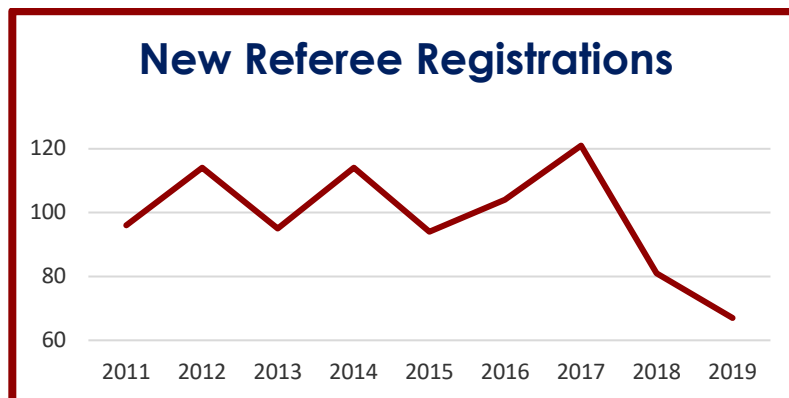
- Language Matters – Adopt Terminology of “3-Ref” instead of “3-Man”
- More Broadly Incorporating Female Refs in State-Directed Mentoring/Instructional Programs
- Endorse and Help Initiate the “Maryland Female Referee Task Force”

In August 2019, two open positions on the Maryland Referee Committee were filled by female representatives, the first time the committee has had at least one female representative. MWSRA has maintained its advocacy and communications with the Committee and continues to evaluate its internal operations to better support female referees

CHALLENGES IN 2019

Referee Development

The shortage of referees continues throughout the region, requiring additional efforts in order to maintain high levels of coverage as well as referees having to work more games and longer days. MWSRA's New Referee Development Program (NRDP) seeks to alleviate some of the impacts of this regional shortage by retaining referees more effectively year-to-year but scaling these programs has been challenging. This was exacerbated by MWSRA's Director of Referee Development leaving his position in September 2019 with no immediate replacement and one of our assignors having to stop assigning midway through the Fall season due to health concerns.



As a result, MWSRA's new referee registrations did not increase compared to 2018, as described in the chart above. This data also does not capture fall 2019 efforts setting up the partnership with the University of Maryland Intramural Officials program for the March 2020 course noted previously. Progress will continue to be tracked as MWSRA scales its efforts in 2020.

2018-2020 MWSRA LEADERSHIP TEAM

Officers

President – Matthew Popkin
Vice President – Behnam Farzam
Treasurer – Seth Cohen
Secretary – Bob Moss

Board of Directors

Alex Echeandia
Fran Gavelli
Michael Greenwood
Noah Grill (Under 25 Representative)
Mike Kelley (Under 25 Representative)
Ted Kimani
Mary Ramirez de Arellano

Assignors

Wendell Hughes
Jack Kyriakos
Keyan Mohtashemi
Bob Moss
Dana Terman

Committee Chairs

Administration & Professionalism – Behnam Farzam
Observation & Evaluation – Pat Werner
Recruitment & Development – Fran Gavelli

Coordinators & Liaisons

Gabriel Ado (until September 2019)
Alan Cecilio
Michael Greenwood
Mike Kelley
Dan Lukash
Mary Ramirez de Arellano
Tom Schick

Assignor Review Task Force

Seth Cohen
Michael Greenwood
Dan Lukash
Carlos Perez
Abdollah Safa
Jeremy Zehr

For questions or comments, please contact Matthew Popkin at mwsrapresident@gmail.com.