

TPA Member Newsletter

April 22, 2023



See the TPA website at tallahasseepickleball.com

IN THIS ISSUE

- **Membership Meeting: May 4, 6:00 PM, Eastside Branch Library (*Includes Ben Johns Joola Paddle Raffle Prize*)**
 - **Early Tallahassee Pickleballers Hold Reunion**
 - **Membership Renewal Reminder**
 - **Tom Brown Park Needs Shade**
 - **TPA Adds Two New Volunteer Positions to Support Operations**
 - **Membership Status**
 - **501(c)(3) Status**
 - **Tallahassee Pickleball Association Facebook Group**
 - **Pickleball Central DISCOUNT CODE**
 - **Update your TPA Profile Data on our [website](#)**
 - **Reach Out with Questions and Ideas**
 - **TPA Board Members**
-

Membership Meeting: May 4, 6:00 PM at Eastside Branch Library (*Includes Ben Johns Joola Paddle Raffle Prize*)

Mark your calendars for **May 4, 6:00 pm, at the Eastside Branch Library** for the first Tallahassee Pickleball Association membership meeting. All TPA members are encouraged to attend. We will review TPA history, discuss plans for the coming year, *announce new board members*, and hold a Q&A session. Please bring your ideas and questions to the meeting.

Lenin Mongerie, the Pickleball Supervisor for the City of Tallahassee Parks and Recreation has tentatively agreed to come and answer a few questions.

You can purchase raffle tickets at the door for a *Ben Johns Joola Paddle*: \$2 each; 3 for \$5. Ticket sales begin April 22nd at the PB&YAY! tournament at Chaires Park. You do not need to be present at the meeting to win.

Free Door prizes will also be awarded to attendees.

Early Tallahassee Pickleballers Hold Reunion

By Fred Markham

President, Tallahassee Pickleball Association

The founding group of Tallahassee pickleballers met April 17 at the Senior Center to reminisce about their early days of pickleball and play a few games. These players started playing pickleball at the Senior Center in 2011, when there were no courts and no one had even heard of the game. They had been playing mini-tennis with a nerf ball, and they jumped at the chance to switch to pickleball when it was offered by Glen Howe, tennis supervisor for Tallahassee Parks and Recreation. One dissenting vote preferred mini-tennis, and no one seems to remember his name - "Some guy with an English accent" is the best recollection from those present at the time. Glen Howe knew about pickleball because he had been playing for several years at The Villages while visiting with his parents. Ken Loewe said that the mini-tennis balls kept knocking pictures off the Senior Center walls, which may have provided some motivation for the change.



Some of the first group of Tallahassee pickleball players: Left to Right, Ann Megargee, Jim Everington, Shelley Hill, Deb Williams, Linda Smith, Ken Loewe, Debra Everington, Carolyn Allaire, Barry Powers, Zippy Wartenberg, Patsy Cox

Pickleball's beginnings at the Senior Center were crude - just a single court with a net and tape marking four corners on the ballroom floor, and they only played one session per week. But the sport was so popular that lines

only played one session per week. But the sport was so popular that lines were soon added for two courts and play was expanded to twice weekly. Everyone in the group has the highest praise for Glen Howe and the Tallahassee Senior Center staff for their strong support of the new pickleball activity. Barry Powers said that “Glen was the driving force that worked with city officials to obtain the necessary equipment and courts,” and also served as the group’s instructor, coach, and mediator. The Senior Center staff, including Andrea Personett, Aurora Hansen, Kristy Carter, and Sheila Salyer “were most helpful and a joy to work with.”

Just as today, early pickleball had to compete for resources (dancers didn’t want tape on the ballroom floor, tennis players and basketball players objected to pickleball lines on their courts), but Tallahassee Parks and Recreation gradually expanded access by adding indoor and outdoor courts at community centers. Private courts were also added at Premier Health and Fitness club after Jim Everington began taking the nets there for weekly sessions. Today, Ashley Edwards, Glen Howe, and Lenin Mongerie of Tallahassee PRNA continue to be leaders in adding courts and services, and Amanda Heidecker, Director of Leon County Parks and Recreation, is working to increase courts county-wide. Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency, led by Director, Autumn Calder, is also actively adding pickleball courts to all new area parks.

From the seedling start of about a dozen players, Tallahassee pickleball has grown to more than 2000 players and dozens of courts at indoor and outdoor venues around the county. Barry Powers, one of the group’s leaders and keeper of some early records, says that there were about 60 players after the first year. City records estimate the numbers at 900 area players in 2017, 1500 in 2021, and now 2200 in 2023. Cindy Mead, who leads the Capital City Senior Games, recalls that there were 21 participants in 2013 when pickleball was first added, and that in 2023 the number had grown to 166 participants. Pickleball now has the highest participation of all the Senior Games sports events.

Several of the earliest players are still playing pickleball. You can get a game with Zippy Wartenberg, Jim Everington, Linda Smith, Shelley Hill, Deb Williams, and others, at the Senior Center or at Jack McLean, Sue McCollum, and Walker Ford community centers. A few originals have moved away from the area, including Tish Cunningham (North Carolina) and LaRae Donnellan (The Villages). LaRae wrote an early newsletter series with the clever title “Relish Pickleball,” and she occasionally returns

to Tallahassee to play in the Capital City Senior Games, including when she medaled with Charlie Giblon in the 2022 mixed doubles, 70-74 age group event.

Some of the early players can no longer play due to advancing age and health problems, but they still occasionally drop by the Senior Center for a visit, or are visited by their old pickleball friends at their homes or long term care facilities. One of these is Karen Denson, whom several players described as “the heart and soul of the group.” Karen worked with Debra Everington in the early years to run several “Paws & Picklers” fundraising events for Canine Companions. Some of the early players continue to visit Karen today in the nursing home.

Many current Tallahassee pickleball players were introduced to the game by these early adopters. Rod Houck, now a Director on the board of Tallahassee Pickleball Association, was playing basketball at Premier Health Club in 2012 when Barry Powers called him over to give pickleball a try. As has happened with so many others, Rod was an instant convert. Carolyn Allaire welcomed numerous people to pickleball over the years, always starting with the advice to “get proper court shoes” and “don’t back up for a ball.” Those who ignored her advice did so at their peril! Carolyn switched back to tennis during Covid-19, but after hitting a few balls with her old friends (see photo) Zippy Wartenberg, Patsy Cox, and Ken Loewe, she has the look of someone who might return to pickleball soon!

The Senior Center continues as a pickleball social center, with 4 open play sessions and a beginner lesson each week. Lynda Dickens is the volunteer leader who welcomes and introduces new players and ensures that the court rotation goes smoothly. Lynda and Zippy were key organizers to bring the group together for this week’s reunion, and Barry Powers provided extensive background and details from the early days.





Left to Right: Carolyn Allaire, Zippy Wartenberg, Patsy Cox, and Ken Loewe gather for a paddle tap after playing at the Tallahassee Senior Center.

Early Tallahassee pickleball was a social activity as well as an athletic event, and included holiday parties when the group would play in costumes, and group outings such as dinner and bowling. The group also reminisced about early days going to tournaments in the region, including the Florida State Games. Zippy Wartenberg wore a t-shirt to the reunion that she got at the Florida State Games in 2014.

Tallahassee pickleball is now on an incredible growth path, going from 0 to 2200 players in its first 12 years. Who knows where we may be in another 12 years from now, but we shouldn't be surprised to find some of the early adopters from 2011 still on the courts in 2035!

Membership Renewal Reminder

TPA members will receive an email reminder to renew each year during the anniversary month of joining the association. These emails are sent automatically by our membership software. Please renew when you get the notification to help us continue advocating for improved pickleball resources and services. All TPA board members and workers are volunteers, so that all funds go directly into operations, pickleball equipment, and advocacy. If you have any questions about anything related to association finances or operations, please ask by emailing admin@tallahasseepickleball.com or ask any board member when you see them on the courts.

Tom Brown Park Needs Shade

TPA has requested (numerous times) for Tallahassee Parks and

Recreation to add shade at the Tom Brown Park pickleball courts. The photo shows a typical crowd awaiting their turn at an open play session. We need to shade the area where everyone gathers between games, which is along the fence near the gate and bleachers. Note also that the dirt areas need to be paved in some fashion. You can voice your opinion on this matter to Lenin Mongerie when you see him, or by calling and emailing Tallahassee Parks and Recreation. Ashley Edwards, Glen Howe, Lenin Mongerie, and Cindy Mead are all good contacts.

- Ashley.Edwards@talgov.com, 850-891-3853
- Glen.Howe@talgov.com, 850-891-4923
- Lenin.Mongerie@talgov.com, 850-528-4281
- Cindy.Mead@talgov.com, 850-891-3875





TPA Adds Two New Volunteer Positions to Support Operations

Newsletter Manager - Judy Howes

For a while now, you have been receiving our email notifications (tournaments, round robins, etc.) and newsletters courtesy of TPA member, Judy Howes. Judy takes content from the TPA board members and quickly and accurately formats it for distribution. This is a great help in that we can quickly get information out to the membership. Without Judy's help we would be much hampered in communications with members.

Website Manager - Melissa Powell

Take a look at the website, which now gets new content on a regular basis. Melissa Powell recently signed on to spruce up the website, correct and update out of date information, add new content (such as the new Instagram button), and find new ways to use the website for communications and operations. Check in with the website occasionally to see what's new.

When you see Judy and Melissa on the courts, be sure to thank them for their efforts!

Membership Status

TPA is growing! We now have 292 active members. Part of the growth is due to the member discounts for PB&YAY! tournaments and TPA events. TPA is also beginning to organize "member only" events. Based on demographic data maintained by the City of Tallahassee, there are approximately 2200 pickleball players in the Tallahassee/Big Bend Area.

501(c)(3) Status

TPA is a volunteer-only Florida tax exempt, nonprofit corporation. We also have IRS 501(c)(3) status.

TPA Facebook Group

Our Facebook group is [Tallahassee Pickleball Association](#), a public group that now has 874 members. Take a look, join the group, and add your Pickleball related posts and comments. (No marketing or soliciting, please.)

Pickleball Central DISCOUNT CODE (Use code **CRTPA** at checkout)

This is a great way to save money on your purchases from Pickleball Central and support TPA at the same time!

Get a 5% discount and TPA gets a 5% credit when you order from pickleballcentral.com using order code CRTPA. For every purchase using the discount code CRTPA, Pickleball Central will credit TPA's account with 5% of the purchase price. Each year TPA can use the funds on account to purchase nets, balls, and other equipment. So you get a discount and contribute to your Pickleball association at the same time. Sweet!

Update Your TPA Profile Data

Help us improve our communications by making sure your email and telephone number are up to date on the [TPA website](#).

Reach Out!

Give us your comments, suggestions, and questions via email, or via post/comment on the [Facebook group](#), or simply talk with one of our board members at the courts. Email: admin@tallahasseepickleball.com

TPA Board Members

Current board members are listed on the [TPA website](#) "About" page.

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