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From the President's Desk

Andy Dalal

Happy Holidays to you and your loved ones!

Thank you for the opportunity to represent the Howard County Pickleball Association. HCPA has over 1100 members and is adding new members every day. The club is thriving, thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of its members. The sport has not only brought us together but has also become a source of joy and fitness for all involved.

Pickleball is not just for the active aging community, but it is for multiple generations where kids play with both parents and grandparents. That is how I started. I was introduced to the game by my father and played with him on his 83rd birthday right before the COVID-19 pandemic. My father and I continued to play during the pandemic on a make-shift court on our driveway, along with my three children, my partner, extended family, and friends. As I write this on my dad's 87th birthday, he continues to play the game at least five days a week and so do the other people who started out with us, although not as often as him. 😊

The age groups that are growing the fastest in pickleball are the 18 to 24 and 65+ age groups and so that proves that my family is not an anomaly and pickleball is both a multigenerational and a lifetime sport. Playing pickleball improves not only our physical abilities but also our cognitive abilities. It is also a very social sport which gained popularity during Covid as it is easy to pick up and play. Since 2019 (the year I started), pickleball has grown 158% in the US and continues to be the fastest growing sport in America.

As we strive to enhance the club experience and expand its reach, I am writing to request your support in recruiting more volunteers. Volunteers are the backbone of our organization, and their contributions are invaluable. Whether you are a seasoned player or a newcomer to the sport, your time and expertise can make a significant impact. There are various roles available, including organizing events, coordinating matches, providing instruction, assisting with club communications, and developing our mobile and online presence.

By volunteering, you not only enrich your own experience within HCPA but also play a crucial role in creating a welcoming and vibrant community for all members. Your involvement can help us achieve our shared goal of promoting health, well-being, and camaraderie through the sport of pickleball.

The association is now using a committee structure which includes Membership Relations, Player Development, Competitions, Facilities, Technology, Communications, Revenue Development, Nominations, and Strategic Planning. Most, if not all, of these committees also have subcommittees. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer and helping on one of these committees or subcommittees, please contact us at hcparoundrobin@gmail.com. We welcome individuals of all skill levels and backgrounds to join us in making HCPA an even greater success.

What's New

Joanne Griesser

Well for starters, the Newsletter has been revived. People were always telling us they didn't see an announcement or email. We think our members are so inundated with information that they just don't have time to read everything or think they will get to it later. So, what do we do? Give you more to read! Carol White is our editor. Board members and committee chairpersons will write articles. We will sell ad space and promote our Association events. Members can submit articles to be published - at Carol's and Andy's discretion. (Please no more articles about naked pickleball with pictures!)

Association Sponsored Indoor Sessions have started. I wrote an article about it in this publication. I'd give you the link but then you'd jump to it and not finish reading "What's New". We are always looking to find indoor spaces for our members at discounted rates. Please take advantage of the offers or we will scale down. Of course, we have Columbia Dill Dinkers and Gary Arthur Community Center. The newest place to play will be The PutAway. Patty Guzman discovered this space and negotiated a great deal. Come out and play!!!

Western Regional Courts and Lights. Yes, the lights will remain on until 9:45 every night, bar any bad weather. Remember to park at the library and walk over if you're going to be there after sunset. They will lock your car in the lot. So, if you don't mind a little wind (lol) and some cold air, come on out and play! There are eight permanent courts and four tennis courts with lines (bring a net for the tennis courts).

The Board Members and our Organization: in June of this year, we changed our structure, added committees and new board members. To see the changes click [here](#) but please come back and finish reading "What's New". We still need volunteers to assist chairpersons on some committees. If you're interested in volunteering, contact me or the board members directly.

Leagues and Round Robins hosted by the Association: we had a Women's League earlier this year and are currently hosting an Open Ladder League. We will continue to host more of these sessions thanks to Troy's organizational skills and his wonderful volunteers. We can't do these things without your help.

Indoor/Evening Skills and Drills will be held in January. We are so lucky that the famous Donna and James will be hosting their very popular Skills and Drills Session at Gary Author Sr. Center January 9 and 23 for 15 lucky people. The session starts at 5:00 and runs until 6:45. This is something you don't want to miss. The cost is \$15 per person.

Member Relations: If you have not attended one of our fabulous events, you are missing something special. Patty Guzman is our Chairperson for Member Relations. She and her crew have been busy: the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, the Boo Event, and the Volunteer Thank You Dinner. They are planning one event per month. (Skipping December because there's already a

lot going on.) The Clothing options have been improved and expanded, check out the new gear we have requested.

Working with Howard County Recreation and Parks (HCRP): we have an improving working relationship with HCRP. Working with Scott Ripley, we have been able to secure facilities in exchange for volunteer hours. We are still teaching the Intro Classes and have hosted some events. We are in discussion about a joint-effort tournament in May. Remember this relationship is a Work in Progress.

More Courts: three new courts at Gateway, 7151 Columbia Gateway Drive, and several courts to be built in Blandair Park and at the East Columbia Library in 2024.

One Last Thing. Maybe you have noticed the Session Coordinators have shirts with the words *Session Coordinator* on the back. The Association thought it would be a good way for you to identify who is hosting the session, even if it's your first time there. We would like to recognize these people and thank them for all they do so you can come out and play.

There is so much more. Even though we know you don't have time to read, keep a lookout on the Stack Team App for announcements on any of the new events and changes we have in store for you.

Treasurer's Report (end of October 2023)

Ken Billingsley

Our financial situation is in good shape and improving. We have over \$47,000 in our accounts, compared to a balance of \$25,000 at the beginning of the year. So far this year, we have invested capital in replacing nets, balls, and enhancing some of our technology. The current plan for capital is to support high school programs with nets/balls/paddles as they expand their pickleball programs and add lines to their tennis courts.

Indoor Play Opportunities this Winter

Joanne Griesser

Check Stack Team App for weekly signup opportunities. Signups open one week in advance of the session for all indoor sessions. Please buy one ticket at a time, no more than two tickets per person.

We may cancel the sessions earlier than the end date if they are not well attended.

Cancelation Policy: If you can't make a session, please contact the admin for that session so they can cancel your ticket. We are sorry but we cannot offer a refund 48 hours before a scheduled session.

Gary Arthur Sr. Center- 2400 MD-97, Cooksville, MD 21723

December 5 thru March 12,
5:00pm – 6:45pm, \$10

Dill Dinkers- 9179 Red Branch Rd, Columbia, MD 21045

Tuesday December 5 thru March 12,
9:00am – 11:00am, \$10
Sunday December 3 thru March 17 (Skip December 24),
3:00pm – 5:00pm, \$10

The Put Away - 254 Najoles Rd Suite A-K, Millersville, MD 21108

Saturdays, January 6 thru March 12,
3:00pm – 5:00pm, To be determined

Lake Elkhorn Middle School - 6680 Cradlerock Way, Columbia, MD 21045

January 6 & 13, February 17 & 24, March 9 & 23,
8:00am-10:00am & 10:00am-12:00pm (2 Sessions per day) \$14

The Association is hoping to add Round Robins, Leagues and Drill Session events to the Indoor Calendar. Stay tuned to the Stack Team Application for updates.

2023 Outdoor Pickleball in Review

Andrée Cates

All in all, this year was a very good year for outdoor pickleball. A BIG THANK YOU to the many volunteers who stepped up to the plate to host an outdoor session, from sunup to sundown! The weather mostly cooperated with a few days that were a bit smoke-filled thanks to the Canadian fires. (Remember that?)

Now that the fall/winter light is vanishing much sooner (after Dec. 21 the days will be getting longer!) many sessions have had to expire. However, there is one promising note and that is the lights at Western Regional Park will remain operable throughout the evening until 9:45. You just must remember to park outside of the park's gates as those do lock up at 5 pm.

If you prefer playing outdoor pickleball, more courts are available! Columbia Association built three courts off Columbia Gateway (south side of Thomas Edison). Bring a leaf blower for the courts on Thomas Edison though because these courts are nestled among a lot of trees. And don't forget that most Howard County high school tennis courts have been marked with pickleball lines. Some courts are marked such that the tennis net is used. If you use the tennis net remember to adjust the middle of the net to 34 inches. Click [here](#) see the places to play.

Interestingly, according to CityBiz, East Columbia Library Park is slated to continue its expansion next year. This project will include a playground, a pavilion, improved baseball fields, basketball

courts and dedicated pickleball courts! As for the pickleball courts slated for Blandair Park? Who knows? The latest word I've seen is that the county "anticipates construction" for six dedicated courts sometime in 2024. We shall see.

We had some great outdoor drill sessions this past year! From ball machine sessions, to drill sessions designed for both beginner and advanced players. These sessions are invaluable and can really improve your skills. So, if you didn't drill this year, try it next year! It will make a difference! And even if you don't like drilling, you know how to be your social self and join us during one of the many upcoming outdoor sessions. Use Stack Team App (downloaded from wherever you get your apps) or go online to find scheduling. Just be aware though that many sessions require an 'rsvp' response, so you need to use the app for that.

Finally, if you want to give back to the community and you know a thing or two about pickleball because you've been playing for a while, consider donating your time to teaching/assisting Nancy Hartka and her crew when Howard County Recreation and Parks bring back their Beginner lessons held at Atholton Park. These lessons provide beginning players with a solid foundation in how to play safely and adequately but keep the addictive fun in the game.

Proposed Rule Changes for 2024

Ken Billingsley

While this list is not inclusive, some of the primary rule changes proposed for 2024 may affect your Serve / Equipment / Tournaments - Rally Scoring. (source: <https://rules.usapickleball.org/>)

- Serve - There is discussion to only allow the drop serve in the future. The Pro level will continue to fight this, but the proposed rule change is still in discussion.
- Equipment – in 2023 the rules were changed to require players' clothing to not match the ball. There are proposals to extend this to the paddle as well. This can mean a paddle that matches the ball color OR a paddle that matches the clothing of the player (thus making it harder to see the paddle).
- Rally Scoring – Tournaments may be allowed to utilize rally scoring for singles and doubles in 2024. (editor's note: this will likely eliminate aggressive serves, thus making the drop-serve requirement moot.) This will not carry over to recreational play but be sure to check your tournament rules before signing up if you don't want to do rally scoring.

Howard County Special Olympics Pickleball

Bob Sans

Special Olympics Howard County (SOHC) has allowed us to bring Pickleball into the sports that are offered to its Special Olympic Athletes. Pickleball locally within Special Olympics has mirrored the growth of the sport that we have seen in this county as well as the entire country. It is now one of the most popular sports offered through SOHC. A significant reason for its popularity in Howard County can be attributed to the members of the HCPA who have been involved in volunteering and working one on one to teach as well as to play pickleball with the athletes. In my opinion, the reason why our program works and has been successful can be traced directly to the enthusiasm and dedication that our volunteers bring to each session. On 3/17/24, we will be starting our third season of play at Dill Dinkers in Columbia. We will be using all 12 courts for two hours each week and can anticipate having up to 72 Special Olympic athletes. With the increase in participating athletes comes the need for additional volunteers. The program runs almost every Sunday for 11 weeks. It does not require a commitment to volunteer for all 11 weeks nor for the full two hours. There is a certification process that is required by Special Olympics as well as attending a short Orientation program. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or would like some information concerning the program, please feel free to contact me at either (908) 692-7977 or rwjs@verizon.net.

Library of Resources

Jay McTighe

The recently formed Player Development Committee has compiled a “library” of resources available to all HCPA members, including: 1) more than 125 instructional videos on a wide variety of pickleball skills, ranging from beginning level to level 5.0, and 2) a collection of more than 50 articles containing tips and strategies for various player levels.

These resources are posted on the HCPA members website under - Members - Player Development. Here are direct links to these resources:

Videos: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/199H2-205P2NANsN79zwwfig1JVEHnMGkb/edit>

Articles: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/152xckiwponnuQlZdO8woIP7DvMs4GeJZ/edit>

Note: These resources have been prepared on GOOGLE DOCS to enable easy updates. You can download the files as WORD or PDF files if you want to house them on your personal device.

Competition Committee

Troy Osten

The Competition Committee has been very active in planning and executing its first competition events since September. We will have held two different events by year's end and hope to hold many more in the coming year based on membership demand. We are always looking for input on events and welcome your feedback. The competition type and day of events can greatly affect the registration and we want to make sure we are serving the membership well.

Women's League

We had 24 women register for our inaugural league. The league started October 5th and ran six weeks until November 16th. There were five weeks of play and a final week of playoffs. We held play from 5-7 PM on Thursday evenings at Western Regional Park (WRP). Each night all teams played six matches in two hours. This was a good pace to allow breaks and record scores. We received very good feedback from the participants and plan on having other similar events with women, men, and mixed offerings. Substitute players were allowed for times when players weren't available (except during playoffs). We recommend joining the subs list if you can't play all the events. All matches were recorded in DUPR.

Many thanks to our League Directors (Linda O'Neil, Kathy Buckley, Clara Lee, and Donna Khan) whose contributions kept things running smoothly and made it fun!

Congratulations to our winners!

Gold: Linda Lang & Margie Calloway

Silver: Emily Downs & Kelly Nycum

Bronze: Kathy Buckley & Linda O'Neill

And lastly, to provide value for our members, we only charged \$25 per person!

Open Ladder League

For our second league, we decided to use the Ladder League format. League play was an open doubles format consisting of both men and women. Players were initially assigned to courts based on DUPR ratings at time of registration. Players who did not have a DUPR rating were paired with other individuals who do not have a DUPR rating. We also had 24 players register for this league.

And based on all the good will and support we have provided HCRP, the county allowed us to reserve the new permanent courts at WRP every Saturday for 5 weeks!!

Just like the first league there were six games per session. However, the difference was you played three games with the four players on your assigned court and had a different partner each game. At the end of those three matches, the top two players moved up a court and the bottom two moved down. This has resulted in many close matches and has been great competition. Again, we chose to record matches in DUPR for this league as well.

And a big shout out to Hitesh Nigam and Eric Chipurnoi for being our League Directors in this continuing league that ends December 16th.

Possible next events

As we look to the new year, we are encouraged by the friendly and fun competition our members have engaged in. A few things we are looking at organizing to continue this include:

- Quick tournaments
 - Round Robin tournaments
 - Singles and Doubles One Day Matches
 - Tournament Software Training tournaments
- Leagues
 - Men's/Women's/Mixed
 - Ladder/Random/Challenge/King & Queen
- Large Tournaments
 - May HCRP sponsored/HCPA run tournament
 - Oct Joola MD Open Tournament
 - High School players Tournament

Again, we welcome volunteer support and your good ideas on what interests you. Please send your thoughts to tdosten@gmail.com.

2023 JOOLA Maryland Open

Ken Billinsley

Thanks to all our volunteers and the players, we had another successful event. Despite the weather challenges, we hosted 1,164 matches for 579 players over four days in two different venues. We raised about \$15,000 from the event that will be used to help promote pickleball in Howard County through our high school initiative, as well as allow us to offer more indoor pickleball opportunities this winter as we expand our indoor schedule. The event also helped us nearly double our donation to Grassroots. Through the raffle and our HCPA donation, we presented a donation to grassroots of \$8,000. Thank you for helping put on another successful tournament, and we hope you are looking forward to next year.



Member Relations Committee

Patty Guzman

The Social Activities Committee organized three events this quarter.

- A ribbon cutting ceremony was held at Western Regional Park on September 8th to celebrate the completion of eight dedicated pickleball courts. Along with the four tennis courts which have lines for pickleball, we now have a location with 16 courts! Linda O’Neill led this event, which included speeches by Howard County executives and Maryland state senators, snacks, and lots of pickleball play!
- A Halloween party, organized by Teresa Love and Lisa Babcock, was held at Western Regional Park on the Friday before Halloween. We had a beautiful, warm evening for pickleball play and socializing! Over 75 people attended this joint Howard County Pickleball Association-Howard County Recreation and Parks event. There was music, costumes, decorations, potluck dishes and pickleball play on the 16 courts at WRP!
- We held a party for Joola volunteers and HCPA session coordinators at the North Laurel Community Center on November 22nd. We served delicious food from Mission BBQ and had open play on six courts for two hours. Nearly 70 people attended this event. All attendees had the opportunity to buy raffle tickets for paddles, bags and other pickleball accessories. In addition, as part of our charter to give back to the community, we presented a donation of \$8,000 to Grassroots, an organization which provides crisis counseling, emergency shelter and transitional housing.

Our Clothing Committee, led by Laurie Alderman, worked with Spoiled Office to offer an expanded selection of pickleball shirts, hats, jackets and other pickleball accessories. All merchandise is adorned with HCPA logos. Check it out [here](#).

Technology Committee

Earl Sneeringer

The HCPA Technology Committee is in the process of assessing the capabilities of the current website & mobile applications and identifying what is currently lacking. The objective is to determine if a change to a new integrated mobile and web application is worth undertaking. Once all the requirements have been documented, the committee will review various alternative platforms to see if there is a better way to provide the information and communication capabilities to our members. Our technology committee currently consists of Earl Sneeringer, Joe Pagan, Mike Gross, Neena Richard and Jean Fregeau. If anyone else is interested in joining the technology committee, please contact Earl Sneeringer via the website’s contact page.

Communications Committee

Earl Sneeringer

The HCPA Communications Committee is working to improve the Association's communication with its members. Thus far, we have updated the Local Places to Play listing on our website. Next, we will restore the Quarterly Newsletter to provide current information about Association activities and pickleball-related news that will interest our members. Please check out the website and give us feedback as the committee continues to review and look for ways to enhance it.

Our communications committee currently consists of Earl Sneeringer, Carol White, Jay McTighe and Clara Lee. If you are interested in joining the communications committee, please contact Earl Sneeringer via the website's contact page.

Places to Play

Jay McTighe

We recently updated the list of Places to Play in the area. This list is posted on the HPCA website at: <https://howardcountypickleball.org/places-to-play/local-places-to-play/>

Note: Thanks to the efforts of the Association, the tennis courts of all the Howard County public high schools (except Wilde Lake and Guilford Park) have now been marked with pickleball lines and these courts are available for free play when they are not being used by the school system!

Thanks for reading this newsletter. We welcome your comments/suggestions/articles. Send them to cmwhite214@hotmail.com. Carol White, Editor