

“Profiles in Courage” The beginnings of Pickleball in the Villages by Terry Holmquist

As we continue pointing out nothing happens by magic, this week we feature Steve Williams who in 2014 became the club’s first “court manager”.

In 2013 Steve’s daughter Dr. Leilani enticed him to try pickleball. He was reluctant to play since it was a younger crowd but after 15 minutes he was hooked and bought his first paddle at that event.

Steve starts hearing rumblings of pickleball in the Villages, how can Steve resist checking it out? “Checking it out” by definition means getting recruited.

With Steve as a member a committee was formed to discuss the feasibility of working with the tennis club to allow pickleball play on the tennis courts. The team worked well together to make things happen, unfortunately that entailed much work on the pickleball side to make the tennis courts work as pickleball courts. Steve tirelessly led the charge, with help from others, to reconfigure the courts for pickleball play. This entailed: 1. Buying tape and finding the best deal since a lot was needed. 2. Laying down tape to mark the pickleball parameters every time it was time for pickleball. 3. Lots of measuring and bending over. 4. Removing the tape after play. In April 2016 Steve became the 2nd president while still presiding as court manager. With cooperation from the tennis club permanent blue dots mitigate all the necessary measuring needed to lay down the tape.

As a way of introducing pickleball to the Villages, Steve helped organize the first clinic other members and acted as one of the instructors during the clinic. He wisely passed off instruction to Mike Walias (more in a future article).

According to Don Jackson, Steve became the main guy to measure and then stake out those alternate POTENTIAL sites before we eventually got approval of our current site.

During construction of the new courts Steve was diligent in keeping on top of things so if he noticed any issues he could bring it up to the Club Board Pickleball committee members.

As president, Steve’s goal was “to grow the club and take action to get the ball rolling to bring dedicated pickleball courts to the Villages”. I’d say he accomplished the goal!

