
Great Lakes Ambassadors News

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Fri, Jan 16, 2009

We are underway with 2009 and this seems like a good time review our New Year's Resolutions and review how we are doing so far. Our Great Lakes Region resolutions are clearly described in the 2009 Regionalization Plan that was approved by the USAPA Board in December.

In this Newsletter, let's review sections of the Plan and see how well we are performing against the goals in the Plan.

Great Lakes Region Action Network

The Plan established the "*Great Lakes Region Pickleball Action Network, which will grow throughout 2009 to include the Planning Committee and other Pickleball Promoters that are focused on the common goals and tactics identified in the Plan. Local Ambassadors, USAPA Members, and players who chose to express their enthusiasm for the game by "working the Plan" are automatically Members of the Action Network.*"

Our Newsletters throughout the year will highlight specific achievements of the Action Network with the intention of identifying actions that work and can be emulated across the Region. Please forward updates from your activities so that we can identify you as members of the Action Network.

USAPA Membership

The most striking goal of the Plan is a **stretch goal for the Region 50+% growth in the number of USAPA Members (from 93 - to >140) by November 2009.**

Thanks largely to high quality Clinics, Tournaments and USAPA Ladders, the Region has

- **exceeded the 12-month 50+% growth goal in just 2 1/2 months**
As of January 15th, we now have 154 USAPA Great Lakes Region Members – an increase of 61 Members or 66%!

Thanks largely to high quality Clinics, Tournaments and USAPA Ladders, Michigan has

- **exceeded the 12-months goal of adding 25 new Members (to grow from 42 to 67 Members)**
As of January 15th, we now have 94 USAPA Great Lakes Region Members in MI – an increase of 52 Members or 124%!

How did this happen? Frankly, by supplying outstanding effort to the tactics listed in the Plan.

MI Pickleball Promoters have built collaborative efforts around two

“Great Lakes Region Showcase Events”:

- Michigan Senior Olympics (MSO) February 2nd-4th - USAPA Sanctioned (Tier 3)
- Auburn Hills Happy New Year Pre-MSO Tournament 1/3/09- USAPA Sanctioned (Tier 4)

Michelle Pozan, Auburn Hills Senior Services and Fitness Coordinator, is a SE Michigan USAPA Ambassador. Michelle, serving as Lead Tournament Director for both of these Showcase Events, teamed with USAPA Members Krystee Dorland, OPC Health and Wellness Coordinator, and Janet Razz, Chi Pickleball Enthusiast, to fulfill the "Great Lakes Region Showcase Event" criteria.

The tactics that have worked so well for MI Pickleball Promoters include:

- Offering significant discounts for USAPA Members at Showcase Events
 - 35 of the 46 Auburn Hills Showcase Event Players are USAPA Members
- Obtaining USAPA Sanctioning so USAPA Members receive ranking points
 - 48 of the 80 MSO Players are USAPA Members
- Offering an Instructional Skills Clinic presented by USAPA Member Renard Kolasa and attended by 75 players
- Offering a Partner Search Program to help players make the decision to play in the tournaments
- Offering a "Best Practice" Safe Warm-up Clinic presented by one of the best known senior fitness specialists, Deb Lane, and attended by 61 players
- Offering USAPA Ladder Leagues in three SE Michigan locations
 - 38 of the 93 SE Michigan Ladder Players are USAPA Members
 - OPC Rochester, Janet Razz, Manager, and Krystee Dorland, Captain
 - Northville, Ambassador Jack Licata, Manager
 - Troy, Nancy Robertson, Manager, and Penny Kragh, Captain
- Offering a Rules/Ref Clinic, presented by USAPA Board Member Norm Davis and spotlighting the USAPA online Training Room, including the "Art of Refereeing Pickleball". The extraordinary value of the USAPA website is promoted as a special reason to support the USAPA by becoming a Member.
- Hosting a USAPA Membership Table at Clinics, Tournaments and Ladders and having USAPA Membership forms readily available for players at all times
- USAPA Ambassadors and USAPA Members wear their Member shirts at Clinics, Tournaments and Ladders

The table below compares the membership growth in the Region since 10/31/08.

	IA	IL	IN	KY	MI	MN	MO	OH	ON	WI	Total
10/31/08 Members	3	7	13	1	42	7	3	7	1	9	93
11/09 Members Stretch Goal	3	11	19	2	67	8	5	9	3	13	140
1/15/09 Members	3	8	14	1	94	7	5	7	3	12	154

IL, IN, MI, MO, ON, and WI have added new members. Michigan's growth has been exceptional and is worthy of your consideration and emulation wherever possible. Please contact me or Janet Razz if you would like to discuss Showcase Events and other ways to accelerate membership growth in your local areas.

Recreation

The Plan established Recreation best practices, many of which are being aggressively pursued by members of the Action Network.:

- Identifying new Places to Play and hosting Community Outreach Demo Clinics
 - Beginner's Clinics have been delivered in SW Michigan including Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, and Grand Rapids by Ambassadors Bob Northrop, Melissa Muha, Dick Draigh, Bruce Redman, USAPA Member Dan Clemence, and player Joyce Sickle.
 - Beginner's Clinics have been delivered in SE Michigan including in Independence Twp, Ferndale, Milford, Rochester, Troy, Fraser, and Madison Heights by Ambassadors Owen and Patty Papke, Monzie Edmonds, Bob Cary, and Gary Bejin (New Ambassador), plus Members Clare Bushman, Bruce Castle, Tom Crowley, Lewis Forrest, Lee Kelly, Renard Kolasa, Janet Razz, Mike Simioni and others.
 - Players from Middletown, Ohio, all taught by Ambassador Stanley Volkens, are planning on delivering a Pickleball Clinic for students at Miami University in an attempt to establish a Pickleball Intramural program there.
- Hosting Beginner Lesson Demo Clinics
 - In conjunction with health consultant and producer Mark Maxwell, SE Michigan players participated in a 30-minute episode of Mark Maxwell's TV program to introduce Pickleball to the community. The entire Beginner Pickleball Demo/Clinic is available to other public access stations throughout the country as well as online at Google video http://video.google.com/videosearch?q=Pickleball_IIIw&emb=0&aq=f#
 - Free Beginner Lessons are offered at the OPC Rochester MI twice weekly by USAPA Members Krystee Dorland, Pete LeBarbera, Janet Razz and an extraordinary team of OPC Pickleball Mentors.
- Attracting younger players
 - Ambassador Joe Balagot performed the amazing feat of getting Pickleball included in the Mayor Daley's Chicago Holiday Sports Fest that attracted 80,000 attendees. Joe then proceeded to recruit a small but heroic group of volunteers including Ambassador Fred Fry (WI) who manned the Pickleball courts for three days and taught countless youngsters and their parents how to play.
 - The Mixed Generation Holiday Festival, with 64 players ranging in age from 10 to 74, clearly demonstrated that Pickleball is a Lifetime Sport. Troy Community Center's Carla Vaughan and Elaine Torvinen offer Drop-in Pickleball and Pickleball Ladder Games for all ages.
 - Ambassador Dick Draigh and USAPA Member Nancy Thoenes joined in presenting Pickleball Clinics to the Michigan Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (MAHPERD) at their annual convention in an attempt to promote upcoming Junior Division tournament play.
- Special games for senior fun
 - Ambassador Jean Mulder managed the Pickleball Scramble for 30 players at her winter residence in Florida and gained experience for events that she will host in SW Michigan.

Competition

The USAPA National Tournament is set for November 2-8, 2009 in Buckeye, AZ.

We will base the Great Lakes Regional Tournament on the characteristics of the National Tournament which include

- USAPA Members Only
- USAPA Sanctioned
- Singles, Doubles , Mixed Doubles in all Divisions
- Open Division for all players
- Junior Division (3 ages groups – 18 and Under)
- Senior Division (5-year ages group – 50 and Over)

Given the number of USAPA Members in Michigan, the 2009 Regional Tournament will need to be in Michigan where we have enough Members to qualify for USAPA sanctioning. Tentatively, the 2009 Regional Tournament will be held on outdoor courts in Royal Oak, MI in the late summer. Ambassador Pat Sullivan has been identified as the Tournament Director of this Showcase Event.

The Terre Haute Indiana Regional Tournament has been set for May 9-10 on 6 outdoor courts. This Showcase Event will have Divisions for all ages and has been granted USAPA sanctioning at the Tier 4 level. This is an important step for Ambassadors Paul Barksdale and Rex Lawler; as the USAPA membership grows in this part of the Region, there is strong likelihood that an event like this one could become a Great Lakes Regional Tournament for USAPA members in 2010.

A Senior Pickleball Tournament has been set for August 1st in Middletown Ohio by Ambassador Stanley Volkens. This Showcase Event will likely draw players from Indiana and other Great Lakes states.

The Michigan Senior Olympics 2009 Summer Games, expected to draw more than 100 players from throughout the USA and Canada, are scheduled for July 6-12th in Rochester, Michigan.

These and other tournaments throughout the Region will be designated as Great Lakes Showcase Events because they represent high quality events in terms of competition, organization, and hospitality. As has been proven in Michigan, Showcase Events are very effective as a means to drive increased USAPA memberships.

The criteria to be designated as a Showcase Event include the following:

- Open to USAPA Members and non-members
- Discounts offered to USAPA Members (unless this is not doable because the event is part of a larger event like the senior or state games that include other sports)
- USAPA rules enforced by trained referees
- USAPA tournament software used so that results are posted on the USAPA website – requires that the Tournament Director is a USAPA Member
- USAPA Membership table available for onsite registration
- Event is listed on the Great Lakes Regional website calendar with a description before and after the event (with pictures) posted on the website
- Branded label "Great Lakes Region Showcase Event" used on flyers

USAPA sanctioning can be a goal for some larger events, but it is not necessary to obtain the Great Lakes Pickleball Showcase Event designation.

Please take some time right now to plan your next local tournaments, Senior Games, State Games, etc. and send us the

- Dates
- Divisions and Format

We can help you

- Resolve any scheduling conflicts with other nearby areas
- Apply for the Showcase Event designation
- Promote your event
- Post your events on the Great Lakes Pickleball website calendar
- Obtain access to the USAPA Tournament software
- Train new referees
- Drive a USAPA Membership campaign associated with the tournament

Let's extend the collaboration of the Action Network to include all parts of the Region and keep the spirit of Great Lakes Pickleball steaming full-speed ahead
– Just for the Fun of It!

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