

# Fast Cars and Fun

**Members of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club all share a common love of racing. Club members regularly take group trips to local tracks, while also volunteering in various ways throughout the community.**

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By Cody Hills

If it's got a motor, chances are The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club wants to know how fast it can go.

The resident lifestyle group of racing enthusiasts meets at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month – from September through May – at Colony Cottage Recreation Center, and has one simple mission statement it embodies: A love for racing.

"We seem to be a club that if it has a motor and it's racing something else with a motor, we're interested in it," said President Tony Kennea, of the Village of Collier. "It's all about racing for us, no matter what it is, and that's in the blood of all of our members."

Founded in September 2006, the club's membership is known for wearing bright yellow shirts – highly visible in grandstands and pit areas at race tracks both near and far.

Along with regular trips to local short tracks, the club routinely embarks on group outings to Daytona International Speedway – including for this upcoming Saturday's Coke Zero Sugar 400 – and an annual club trip to the NHRA Gatornationals in Gainesville.

The group has welcomed two Daytona 500 winners (Marvin Panch, Geoff Bodine), an inductee of the National Sprint Car Hall of Fame (Jack Hewitt), and various track operators and racing officials from across the country as special guest speakers to its meetings.

"We've got motor racing fans from all walks of life in our club, including a lot of ex-drivers and talent buried within," Kennea said. "Not only do we take an interest in racing, but we come with a lot of history."

Joining its passion for fast racing, the club also regularly lays down a blistering lap in its never-ending race to promote community stewardship.

In the past, the group has held fundraisers for scholarships awarded to area high school students, while also offering financial support to local short-track racers and their families throughout the Central Florida region – with the club logo often adorning race cars.

"I think it's all in the name of sharing our love of motor sports with others," said Mike Anderson, of the Village of Tamarind Grove, who serves as social media coordinator on the "pit crew," the name lovingly dubbed for the club's board of directors. "Whether that's from helping youngsters race remote-control cars to real race cars, we've become good friends and partners with a lot of racers over the years.

"Plus, it's always nice to see your club logo on a car," Anderson continued, "especially when it's rolling into Victory Lane."



On July 25, the club also will once again take part in the annual Camp Villages slew of events – hosting a remote-control car racing extravaganza. The group plans to transform a room inside La Hacienda Recreation Center into a NASCAR-style track that will allow grandchildren and grandparents the opportunity to race for the checkered flag against one another.

Lisa Parkyn, Camp Villages coordinator for The Villages Recreation and Parks Department, said the event has become one of the most popular on the summertime docket annually.

“I think it has been very positive. Because each year, we sell out,” Parkyn said. “The tickets go fast for that particular activity, and each year the club is willing to come back. I think they always enjoy interacting with the kids because a lot of kids have favorite NASCAR drivers. And then they hear this group just chit-chat and talk about their favorites.

“They make it fun and competitive, that’s for sure,” she said.