

Villager's Bocce Group Facilitates Friendships

Gary Civiletti wanted to play the sport in The Villages, so he formed his own group in 2010.

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By Summer Jarro

Gary Civiletti has played bocce with his buddies in The Villages for more than 10 years.

Civiletti, of the Village of Buttonwood, played before moving to The Villages. He saw people playing it when he lived in Spencerport, New York and wanted to try it. So he bought bocce balls and played with his neighbors.

Forming a Group

He still has his original equipment and plays regularly in The Villages.

"I love it," Civiletti said. "Wouldn't do this if I didn't."

When he moved to The Villages, he couldn't find anyone interested in forming a group, so he made his own. In October 2010 he formed Gary's Bocce Buddies. He is also part of another bocce group that meets at Hibiscus Recreation Center.

Gary's Bocce Buddies meets Wednesdays and Fridays at Fish Hawk Recreation Center. On Wednesdays, the group gets there a little earlier to enjoy breakfast.

Whenever Civiletti plays with his group, he wears a shirt that says "Gary's Bocce Buddies." It was made by a member's son.

Civiletti also has competed in tournaments such as the Senior Games.



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Gary's Bocce Buddies member Sergio Garcia, of the Village of Buttonwood, aims for the jack Wednesday at Fish Hawk Recreation Center. The group, formed by Gary Civiletti, of the Village of Buttonwood, starts by having breakfast and then playing bocce.

Having Fun Together

His favorite part about bocce and being part of the group is the camaraderie.

"Everybody loves to socialize," he said.

Dave Kozak, an original member of the group, feels the same way.

"It brings a lot of people together – all their different personalities – and we have a good time interchanging our lifestyles," said Kozak, of the Village of Fernandina.

They couldn't meet for breakfast on Wednesdays after the pandemic hit, but on April 7 the members got the chance to officially meet like they used to and enjoy breakfast.

Members are glad to officially be back.

"They are talking and socializing, and that's what it's all about," Civiletti said.