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President's Report - June 2023

Nolan Ahn, PAK President

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE ALOHA

Pickleball Association Kauai will develop, operate and maintain quality dedicated pickleball venues with the spirit of Aloha.

This has been our stated mission since PAK was formed. To my knowledge we are the only pickleball association in Hawaii that is specifically dedicated to increasing and improving the places we play our great sport. Others say their mission is to promote the game of pickleball. We think pickleball needs no help in becoming popular. It has been the fastest growing sport in America in recent years. A 2023 study of Activities by Participation shows pickleball as the third largest with 36.5 million players. Only biking (51.4M) and running (49.0M) have more, followed by yoga, basketball, golf, tennis, baseball, soccer, and football. With growth comes demand, and a universal problem is a lack of quality places to play. Players soon outgrow blended lines, temporary nets, and poor playing surfaces as their skills advance. Municipalities are constantly asked to provide more venues, but they are limited by budget and priorities that were set before pickleball hit their radars. Last month, the County's first four dedicated pickleball courts were blessed at the Annie Knudsen Part in Koloa. We were told that the County has committed to repairing one of its 24 tennis courts on the island every two years going forward and will consider pickleball courts if it is feasible. Next scheduled court repair is in Wailua Houselots. PAK was significantly present at the blessing, and we expressed our appreciation for the County's efforts. However, much more needs to be done to provide courts for our players and visitors and sooner than 48 years.





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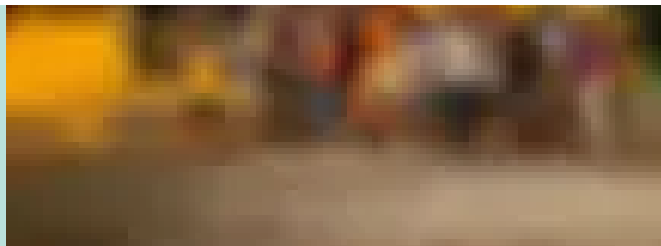
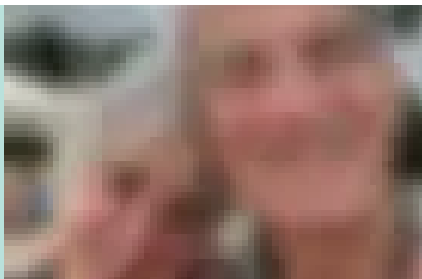
One of the problems with County facilities is that they are unmanaged. That is, they are left open for use by the public without reservation or fees. Fees are prohibited by any third party on County facilities unless approved and a permit is issued. Play is free for any resident or visitor. While free is a good thing, the downside is we are unable to collect money from residents or visitors to be used for maintenance or expansion of venues. Most visiting players are willing to pay and are surprised that they get to play free on our courts just like the local taxpayers do. The private sector has been providing the vast majority of pickleball facilities that are **operated** to produce a profit. PAK wants to operate courts and use those profits to create additional courts around the island. The difference is we want to do it with **the spirit of Aloha**. Our PAK values are **Inclusion, Integrity, and Joy**. Components of Aloha are **kindness, unity, agreeable, humility and patience**.

Recently, I was playing at the new courts, and I observed a group of visitors playing on one of the courts. They had four players and chose to play among themselves rather than mix with the locals. I watched them during the time they were at the courts. Other than courtesies of returning cross-court ball interference, they had zero interaction with the local players. They left without making even one new friend from Kauai. To be fair, the locals let them leave without us making friends with them. In all my other playing times at other venues on Kauai, I had never seen that, and I was saddened. I have heard so many stories of visitors that have been visiting Kauai for many years, but until they started playing pickleball, did not really establish a friendship connection with Kauai folks. The pickleball ohana embraced visitor players and the spirit of Aloha was observed time and time again. Sadly, if we are only to open more courts without a goal of furthering Aloha, more examples of visitors playing pickleball in Paradise without making friends will occur.

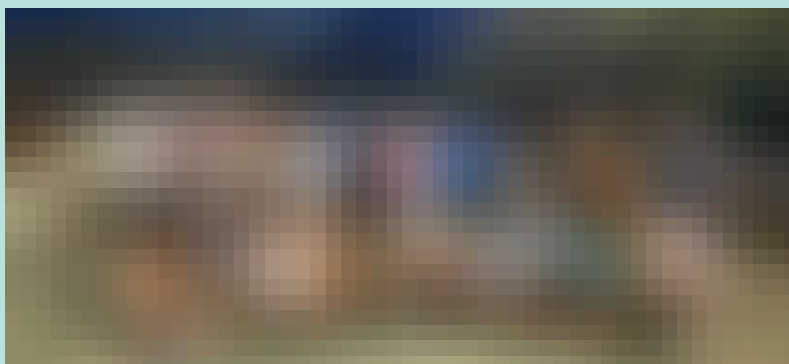
I recently had a friend from 55 years ago come and visit me from California. We got to be good friends as college students/camp counselors working at Camp Naue. We have maintained sporadic contact over the years, but now he was visiting Kauai for a week to attend his daughter's wedding on the beach at Hanalei. We had limited time to connect and do something together (especially since they didn't play pickleball) so I invited them to attend a house blessing party in Kekaha. They were the only malihini at the gathering of kamaaina, and they fell in love with the people, the food, and the hospitality. I am sure they couldn't understand much of the pidgin that was spoken, but they loved experiencing the spirit of Aloha we share with each other here. We sent them to their hotel with gifts of poi, taro, mangos, and tambo tambo Filipino dessert (which they loved).



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Aloha can exist for locals and visitors on the pickleball court. In Lihue, Lori Uyeda, our PAK board member and Membership Chair uses Team Reach to communicate with about a hundred players on Lihue Pickleball Ohana about when to play, special events, newbie clinics, pot lucks (once a month for birthday celebrants), and even to organize a recent pickleball trip to Japan! The Lihue Pickleball Ohana is my inspiration for how to operate an organization with Aloha, and we will try with all our might to live up to their example. By the way, they play on the worse courts imaginable. They deserve better.



We are already late in our announcement of a 2023 PAK Open. Despite the committee being ready with all of the numerous parts of running a tournament, we are waiting for a more definitive date for the re-surfacing and installation of six permanent nets and lines for pickleball on two tennis courts at the Kauai Community College. The contract was awarded at the beginning of 2023, but bad weather has delayed the start of work. We have a reservation for August 18-20 but if the courts are not completed, no other existing venue will be able to accommodate the anticipated number of participants. We have a deadline of June 18 to open registration for the August tournament but as of press time, we are still hanging. Watch this site for a go-no-go decision.