

# **"Picklin' for a Cure" Pickleball Tournament Raises Money for Relay for Life in East Alton**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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EAST ALTON - Local pickleball players gathered on Jan. 13–14, 2024, for a “Picklin’ for the Cure” pickleball tournament that raised over \$4,000 for the American Cancer Society Relay for Life initiative.

Competitors played a round-robin tournament over two days at Keasler Recreation Complex in East Alton. Ruby Berghoff, tournament director and a U.S.A. Pickleball ambassador said “a perfect marriage” of organizations came together to make the tournament successful.

“Pickleball people are just good people. It really worked out well,” Berghoff said. “It was an emotional day in a way because we have several survivors within our organization, within the group that were playing there that day.”

Players and spectators enjoyed a raffle, silent auction and 50/50 drawing throughout the weekend. There were 48 teams and they played in different divisions depending on skill level.

Loretta Gratta and Jane Short won in the women’s novice division, Susan Kidder and Paula Mathews took home the proficient division, and Michelle Fink and Jen Brown won in the skilled division. Scott Franklin and Steve Erslon were the men’s novice winners, followed by father-son duo Larry and Andy Kulp in the proficient division, and Steve Horrell and Jason Aquino in the skilled division. Loretta Gratta and John Kwas won the proficient mixed doubles tournament, and Rachel Krieb and Max Mashburn took home the skilled division.

Berghoff explained that the competition was a fun way to get out of the house and “beat the winter doldrums.” This was her first time organizing a pickleball tournament, and she noted that it had an emotional edge because so many people are affected by cancer.

“It was a little bit different than doing a fundraiser for another cause. This being Relay for Life really meant a lot to a lot of people,” she said. “Every family, everybody that you know out there has been touched by cancer in one way or another. Everybody was on board right away.”

The next Picklin’ for a Cure tournament is already scheduled for Jan. 18–19, 2025. For those who want to learn how to play, Berghoff encourages them to take a class and enjoy the sport.