

Longevity benefits Boose tournament as registration numbers rise

*By Mike Brohard
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While the majority of the country seems to be feeling the economic downturn, such is not the case for a longstanding tennis tournament in Loveland.

The Debbie Boose Memorial Tournament, which benefits Pathways Hospice, is going stronger than ever in what will be its ninth year.

Play begins today at the North Lake Park courts and runs through Sunday's finals.

Registration numbers are up and have surpassed 250, according to tournament director Jon Messick, who admits that's not the norm. He said the Northern Colorado Open, a sanctioned event, was down more than 100 players this year.

The numbers were unexpected, said Jodee Hinton, the marketing project coordinator at Pathways Hospice.

"It's been a very successful fundraiser for us in the past, and our participation numbers are up 20 percent," she said. "We certainly weren't expecting that, but we are thrilled. We've heard people are cutting back on how many tournaments they are playing and they've chosen to play in this one. We're excited to have people so supportive of us."

In some ways, Messick isn't shocked by the turnout, saying it speaks volumes about the volunteers involved, the person being honored and the organization that benefits most.

"The people who play this tournament, it's not all about tennis," said Messick, who is also the head tennis coach at Colorado State. "It's about getting together with friends and family and supporting hospice. The tennis is kind of an excuse."

"I've been involved in charity tournaments in the past, and it seems like they die out after a while, go strong for a few years and then people move on. For this tournament to be in its ninth year, it's a testament to the cause of the tournament and to Debbie. I don't see it stopping."

More than the numbers are growing. The tournament has added a Quick Start program on Saturday morning (11 a.m.), a clinic held by Shane Deacon for children 6-11 years old. Registration is by phone (663-3500) for the free event.

The tournament also added brackets for father/son and mother/daughter teams in two age groups, each being a round-robin affair.

Once again, the tournament will feature a dinner Friday night for the players. Catered by Carrabba's, it is free for players and those younger than 6, but a \$5 fee will be charged to fans. Again, those planning on eating are asked to RSVP in advance through Hinton at 292-1080.

In addition, a professional exhibition held Friday, though Messick said the players were still being finalized. He added the same was the case for a wheelchair exhibition on Saturday.

A big draw annually at the tournament is the award presented to the placers. This year's artwork will be a replica of watercolor done by local artist Dick Schilling called, "Rocky Mountain High." Hinton said the original will be part of the auction that begins Friday at the courts but closes during Saturday's session.