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## Boose tourney plays 10th year

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Ten years ago, the event was thrown together in a hurry as a way to honor a friend.

From those humble and sad beginnings, the Debbie Boose Memorial Tennis Tournament makes its 10th appearance at the North Lake Park courts, starting today.

“I think in many respects, the tournament has gotten better each year,” said her husband, John Boose. “Due to the hard work of a lot of individuals involved with it, it’s just become bigger and better.

“Time’s gone by fast, and it’s still a great tournament for a wonderful cause of Hospice.”

The field is larger than ever, and the event still serves as the biggest fundraiser of the year for Pathways Hospice Care Center at McKee Medical Center.

Debbie Boose was killed in a tragic car accident after attending a meeting for the Colorado Youth Tennis Foundation on April 4, 2001. By July of that year, the courts at North Lake Park were flooded with friends who wanted to honor her memory through two of her passions — tennis and what is now Pathways Hospice.

That first year, the tournament raised more than \$35,000, and according to Kim Mueller, the marketing and outreach executive, more than \$300,000 has been raised over the years to improve the Pathways facility.

Tournament director Jon Messick said this year’s field will be the largest to date, with the 280 entrants registered surpassing the 259 of a year ago.

“It will be our biggest,” Messick said. “It’s a really strong field, too. There are a lot of strong players.”

While that brings out the competitive side, the rest of the event is tailored for a family feel, which Messick said is the tournament’s niche.

Last year, through the efforts of Boose’s daughter Kristy Harris, the QuickStart Tennis program was added to the festivities, allowing children from 4-10 years to get involved with the game. Brackets were also added for father/son and mother/daughter combinations last year, and they continue this year, as well.

John said his family will gather and have dinner, celebrate birthdays and enjoy what the tournament has become. Kristy has two children who have grown up at the tournament, as has her sister Amy Black’s two children.

It’s that family feel that John says as served the tournament so well over the years.

“We’re trying to make it more family oriented. It’s kind of neat families can participate that way,” he said.

“We never made it a sanctioned tournament for that reason, though we still get a lot of really good players. You don’t necessarily have to be an avid tennis player to enjoy yourself. You can come out and play with your kids, and the family atmosphere is really what we’ve tried to promote, more than anything.”

The tournament — with some matches at Thompson Valley High School — runs through Sunday, with the finals of most brackets held that day.

Friday night still stands as one of the biggest for the event, with a dinner sponsored by Carrabba’s (free for players and children 6 and younger; \$5 for all others), and exhibition matches by professionals and wheelchair players. Prize drawings will be held Sunday.

Tickets for that are \$10, and can be purchased at the tournament site.

In what has become one of the tournament’s most celebrated traditions, a local artist donates an original work, with prints or casts used as the awards. This year, Stephanie Gagnepain created “Snake in the Garden” for the tournament, with the original auctioned off Saturday.

