

## Gratitude... Belonging... Inspiration. Our "Third Place"

When club leaders support organized court programming, they also seize the opportunity to use their courts as a competitive advantage in creating a "third place" culture\* at their club, i.e., a place beyond home and work that feels like *Cheers* (where everybody knows your name!).

\*See *Celebrating the Third Place - Inspiring Stories about the "Great Good Places" at the Heart of Our Communities* by Ray Oldenburg

This article seeks to remind club owners and managers how grateful we are that you make racquetball and handball (etc.) possible. Lives are enhanced at your club every day, year after year.

Each of our organizations reached out to players to ask for their thoughts on their "third place," the clubs where they have been members for many years. We received more responses than this article could accommodate, and we will be sure to include them all in their entirety on our websites.

### Racquetball

**Barry Dixon - Glass Court, Lombard, IL (25 years):** "My time as a member at Glass Court has been filled with countless fond memories. I have created lasting friendships, I have caught up with old friends from my college days, and I continue to create new friendships each and every day. One of the best parts of my memories is that three generations of my

family (including my dad, my son and me) have played racquetball at Glass Court."

**Doug Jenkins - Sportsclub, Greenville, S.C. (20 years):** "Racquetball has been in my life for over 40 years now, something I love to do as much today as back when I started. As long as the club has courts, you can count on me to be a member."

**David Stob - Olympic Athletic Club, Seattle, WA (17 years):** "Racquetball is my 'third place' and has been since 1982. In my little two-court club, there are at least five distinct pods of players who treat the club as their 'third place.' I call them the Senior/Masters group, the Technology Workers, the Professional Women, the Young Families, and the Diehards. The reason these players choose one facility over another is because of social groups. Just like a Zumba class creates relationships, so does racquetball."

**Kevin Sendrey - LA Fitness, Dallas/Fort Worth, TX (16 years):** "I spend 5 - 6 days a week at LA Fitness where I enjoy hanging out with my second family: the racquetball crew! My son has also found the love of racquetball and plays up there with us every day. I literally don't know what I would do with my evenings without the courts!"

**Amy Pivovar - Genesis, Omaha, NE (6 years):** "There is really no end to friendship opportunities. When I returned to racquetball in 2015, I was re-introduced to many of the old players, and I soon

weaseled my way into the group that I am in now. Racquetball is just one of those sports where it's so inclusive of everyone. I can't imagine not playing... ever!"

### Handball

**Gary Cruz - Los Caballeros, Fountain Valley, CA (35 years) and Los Angeles Athletic Club, Los Angeles, CA (14 years):** "Since handball is a lifetime sport, I gravitated to health clubs that had courts. With those courts came a connection to a community of similar people. I've maintained a health club membership all my life, and it not surprising that, as a result, I maintained friendships with all the other players who have been members for just as long. We owe a debt of gratitude to the health clubs that have helped us sustain a healthy lifestyle and sense of community for so many years."

**Thomas H. Byer - Los Caballeros Racquet and Sport, Fountain Valley, CA (13 years):** "I stopped playing handball in 1985 when courts were eliminated where I lived. Years later, I returned to handball and play 3 - 4 times a week. In those years away from handball, my health deteriorated with weight gain and more. I need this game in my life."

**Ashley Moler - Tucson Racquet Club, Tucson, AZ (12 years):** "The Tucson Racquet Club has really been an integral part of our family. I became a member in 2009 and have met some of my lifelong friends there who I now consider my family.

We are very lucky to have the Tucson Racquet Club and look forward to many more years and memories made there."

### Conclusion

How can we reach a place where clubs realize how much their members appreciate what they bring... where the members are inspired to devote some time to helping the clubs be more successful... where the "third place" that the clubs provide becomes something very special in the equation of profitability... and where retaining long-term members as well as gaining new members is achieved via the warm atmosphere of friendship and acceptance fostered by the clubs and sustained via the "third place" family?

These aren't easy times, and we all need each other more than ever. Club owners/managers... players... members... please reach out to each other to see what assistance can be arranged. It will look a little different everywhere, and we would love to hear about your successes!

**Returning Members + New Members = Increased Profit = Keeping Courts = Win/Win!**

We're excited about our next article that will suggest *all sorts of ways* courts can be kept busy and profitable. Please visit [bit.ly/clubinsider124](http://bit.ly/clubinsider124) for court programming resources and materials. Visit [ushandball.org](http://ushandball.org) for information on how to get free equipment, instructional resources, and more for your club from the *First Ace Development Program*.

## Live Group Fitness is the Answer... Again.

By: **Terry Browning**

The pandemic has no doubt altered consumer behavior. But, is this alteration a permanent change or a pandemic-induced adjustment? The "Pandemic Boom" has catapulted many industries and products to stratospheric sales increases, including a 500% increase in bread machine sales and an 800% increase in toilet paper sales. And, the world's largest streaming service, *Netflix*, had record breaking sales for six straight months. Is this the new road forward? Have people now really discovered their love for bread making? Will toilet paper sales continue on this roll? Have we decided to stop doing and just start watching?

We'd suggest, and believe most people agree, this pandemic boom was just a temporary detour. Bread machines aren't flying off the shelves anymore because we can only eat so much sourdough. Toilet paper sales are, well, in the toilet with below pre-pandemic levels. And, *Netflix* reported their slowest quarterly sales to start the year in over four years, and they

anticipate their worst quarterly growth ever in Q2 of 2021. Maybe the memes are true; people really *have* finished watching all of *Netflix*!

Our industry suffered from the pandemic bust, with health club closures at nearly 20% and job loss at over 40%. And, of course, a segment of the fitness industry did experience the pandemic boom... streaming at home workouts. We've all read, heard or maybe even contributed to this 200%, 400% or even 700% growth. Even our *MOSSA On Demand* experienced this type of stunning growth, but we knew this was temporary until clubs reopened. Many now believe, or tout, this is the way of the future. They claim this is more than just a detour. This is the new road forward. But, is it?

Similar to other industries, consumer behavior in fitness was forced to change course. And, like other industries, it's most likely a temporary one. What fueled this streaming workout growth was the shutdown of nearly every health club in the world. In the matter of a few days,

(See **Terry Browning** Page 22)



Mike Wedel  
Executive Director  
USA Racquetball  
719-635-5936 #5  
mwedel@usaracquetball.com  
[WWW.TEAMUSA.ORG/USA-RACQUETBALL](http://WWW.TEAMUSA.ORG/USA-RACQUETBALL)



Matthew Krueger  
Executive Director  
U.S. Handball Association  
520-795-0434  
mkrueger@ushandball.org  
[WWW.USHANDBALL.ORG](http://WWW.USHANDBALL.ORG)

WE WANT TO HELP BRING  
FITNESS, EXCITEMENT, AND PROFITABILITY  
TO CLUBS AND COURTS ACROSS THE NATION!