

2023 RASSA Picnic

Our picnic was held on Tuesday, September 19th, and a very fun and meaningful time was had by all. **Henry Rumble**, Commissioner, welcomed everyone and recognized those who directly helped with the picnic.

David Ferguson, Tuesday League Director, followed by naming our RASSA Saints (See web site) who have left us and those who are on our prayer list (See web site); and then giving a prayer.

Then it was time for everyone to socialize and enjoy a great barbecue meal with all the trimmings, while being serenaded by the wonderful music of **Jeff Tyler** and his drummer, **David Hyatt**.

With everyone full of barbecue, etc., Henry then recognized and welcomed Player's Spouses and Family Members, as well as special honored guests including **Gilbert Belcher, Cecil Kersh, John LaBue, Gerald & Alice Stephens** and **Harmon & Judy Turner**. It was great to see all of them again!

He then thanked all of those who have made the overall operation of RASSA a success; and recognized those original players when CASSA (now RASSA in honor of our Lead Founder, Russ Arthur) began in 2004, who are still playing with us. These include **Wayne Sheets, Hollis Beecham** and **Ron Oliver**.

Bill Lovell, Thursday League Director, then noted that the addition of 20 new 2023 active players brought our active current player total to 88. He then called the names of the new players. All are noted in the RASSA Player Directory. He further emphasized the importance of all of us recruiting new players each year and encouraged the players to get 3 or 4 RASSA business cards on their way out and put them in their wallets to give out when they run into someone who might be interested in playing senior softball.

Bill then asked all members of the Central Alabama Softball Hall of Fame to stand and be recognized. He then specifically recognized the new RASSA members inducted this year (**Steve Belcher, Earl Dunn** and **Rel Underwood**)

Dale McWhorter, Board Member and Treasurer, then asked **Lisa Rutherford**, Bob Hunter's daughter, to present the **2023 Gentleman Bob Hunter Sportsmanship Award** to **Ron Oliver**. Dale noted that this is a very special award because the players vote on who the recipient will be each year. (See a detailed write-up on **Ron** on the RASSA web site)

Dale then announced that **Erin Leist** was the winner of the **2023 Bob Hunter Scholarship Award** of \$1,000. Since she was attending class, Lisa accepted the award on her behalf. Erin was born and raised in Laurel, MS, where she was a member at First-Trinity Presbyterian Church. She is currently a senior at Samford University studying interior design and hopes to pursue a career in residential design in Birmingham after graduation. She is an affiliate member of South Highland Presbyterian Church, **Bob** and **Carolyn's** former church, where she contributes her time and talents to the congregation. Dale concluded by congratulating Erin on her scholarship award and hoping that she will be able to come to the park for a visit before our 2023 RASSA season ends.

Henry recognized **Sandi Wilson**, Vestavia Hills Parks and Recreation Superintendent, and summarized her role and what she has done for RASSA. **Sandi** initially worked for Trussville P & R and joined Vestavia P & R as P & R Superintendent 2020. After playing at three previous parks, with the last one being Green Springs, RASSA was very fortunate to begin a long-term relationship with Vestavia P & R and **Sandi**. is a key part of this. When we began playing on the beautiful fields at Liberty

Park, we thought we had died and gone to heaven! **Sandi** was there for us from the very beginning and has done a terrific job over the 3 years we have played here. She has always responded quickly to any concerns or issues, and she demonstrates the best in management responsibility by always delivering when she says that something will be done. We just wanted to express a small token our appreciation to **Sandi** for being a key part of the success RASSA at Liberty Park, and we hope both she and RASSA continue to work together for a long time to come.

Jeff then tested the crowd with a sing a long ending with “Take Me Out to the Ball Game”.

Henry then presented a few special verbal awards – no plaques or certificates - just recognition. He began on a more serious note with the following awards:

The “**Humanitarian Award**” went to **Phillip Cheek** for his annual participation in clean-up efforts following damage caused by storms.

The “**Come Back Player of the Year Award**” went to **Tom Kilgore** for his courageous efforts to return following his serious accident.

Since there are 3 games on both Tuesdays and Thursdays, we need an umpire that is willing to do one of the 3 games at 9:00. So, the “**Umpire Extraordinaire Award**” went to **Pat Buchner** for helping us out by excellently umpiring one game on each day. This is rare, and since Pat may return to playing next year, we will need to get lucky again or have volunteer player umpires next year.

The “**Over and Above Assistance Award**” went to **Ken Sransky** for his voluntarily showing up early on both Tuesdays and Thursdays to help the League Directors set up the equipment for the games. Sometimes he gets here so early that he sets up before the League Directors get here, and he even occasionally shows up with sausage biscuits which he readily shares.

The “**Tenacity and Positive Outlook Award**” went to **Rick Erdimer**. Unfortunately, he has kidney disease. While waiting for a transplant, he must have dialysis every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The amazing thing is that he continues to play softball on both Tuesday and Thursday with a smile on his face. He thanked **Rick** for being a role model for all of us.

Then he moved on to the lighter awards.

The “**Dubious Balance Award**” went to **Henry**. As a result, he and **Phillip Cheek**, his reliable crane, have developed a new softball statistic. It is the “hits versus falls ratio”. The objective is to get more hits than you have falls each game.

The “**No More Ponytail but Continues Tail Gaiting Award**” went to **Rel Underwood**.

The “**Higher Than a Kite Award**” went to **Jim Hill** for his unique pitching style.

The “**Best Beard Award**” was a tie between **David Taylor** and **John LaBue**.

The “**Yellow Bucket Award**” goes to **Beth Moore**. **Beth**, we really do appreciate your encouraging us to recycle.

The “**Biggest Badest Biceps Award**” went to **Ed Girard**.

The “**Best Dresser Off the Field Award**” went to **Ron Oliver**.

The “**Brightest Dresser on the Field Award**” to **Herb McLure**.

The “**Dirt Dauber Award**” went to **Steve Southern** for his amazing slides that we all wish we could still do.

There was a 3-way tie for the “**Big Bopper Award**”. The winners were **Stan Craft, Ken Ray** and **Dwight Thomas**.

And finally, there was a 3-way tie for the “**Funniest on the Field Award**”. The winners were **Phillip Cheek, Harold Fincher (aka Finch)** and **Dwight Thomas**.

Next, **Rel Underwood** read a short poem honoring the iconic Jimmy Buffet and then asked **Jeff** to close things out with the song, “Margaritaville”.

Henry then concluded by thanking everyone for coming and wishing safe travels home.

If you didn’t make it this year, we hope you will in 2024 when we will be celebrating **RASSA’s 20th birthday!**