

Nominee's Name:

Gill Smith

Organisation Name:

White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre (GLL)

Your Nominee's place of work:

White Horse Leisure and Tennis Centre (GLL), Volunteer

Please provide a narrative (600 words max) about your nominee in the space below:

Gill Smith aged 81 and our most active volunteer!

I consider myself fortunate to have been lucky health-wise that I am able to enjoy sports. I have made so many friends who laugh and share the fun, and we have supportive and friendly Leisure Centre staff who give us support and encouragement.

At my age I think it is important to keep moving! Sitting down for long periods means seizing up! One thing that I enjoy is the challenge I set by doing 15,000 steps every day. This has helped by participating in Health Walks, leading the Pickleball group 4x per week as a volunteer and being an active member of the gym.

Pickleball is a real passion of mine. In the UK there are over 70 clubs. I've been lucky enough to represent WHLTC and my country in 19 International fixtures which took place in Amsterdam and Madrid, where I was one of the oldest competitors. What fun to start playing this new game at 76!!! We all wore our UK t-shirts and set off proudly! You can just imagine how great this was at 76 with the grandchildren being well impressed!!!

I am amazed at how active and agile we are all becoming. Watching a group of 55-90 year old players is exciting - their life seems to depend upon retrieving that ball and scoring the next point! I think the game is well suited to older people as the playing area on a badminton court is smaller than a tennis court although the game is similar to tennis. The impact on the body isn't as much as tennis. Pickleball is excellent for mobility, the heart, improving reactions and brain alertness.

I became engaged in Pickleball by being in the right place at the right time! Every week I played badminton with a group of up to 8 senior ladies. At one of these sessions it was mentioned that WHLTC wanted to start a session of Pickleball. I then volunteered to lead this session. I started the game with 8 paddles provided by Go Active with 6 friends from the WHLTC Health walks group who agreed to give it a go. This has now grown to 88 players per week!

At school I found myself forming and running a swimming club. This led to more responsibilities running a netball team and a hockey team when I was 14 years old. Things were different in those days!

Although not a PE specialist, I always ran the netball, hockey and rounders teams and taught hundreds of children to swim. I had my own 2 children, returned to teaching and acted mostly as chauffeur taking them over the country for National level trampolining and County Cricket.

Once retired it seems I couldn't stop, so I found myself leading a group of seniors to climb Snowdon, Scafell and Ben Nevis. In retirement I started playing Badminton, tennis and table tennis with lots of

outdoor swimming and cycling.... then Pickleball took over! Now I enjoy and feel I am benefiting a lot from being a member of the gym here with guidance from the experts. Even in retirement and as a volunteer, there are not enough hours in the day!

I'm really happy with all the support we have at WHLTC. We value our tournaments and our Club Games events where we play against members from other Better centres.

I'd like to introduce children to the game. It's a great game for any age and suited to family enjoyment. We need to get youngsters at schools participating !

http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/yourtown/oxfordshire/11210509.Video__Is_it_tennis__Is_it_bad_minton__No__it_s_pickleball/

http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/11233722.Pickleball_players_strike_world_championship_bronze