

# AFTER A DECADE IN THE VILLAGES, THE MOTOR RACING FAN CLUB CONTINUES TO PICK UP SPEED

BY RICA LEWIS

The smell of hot rubber on the pavement, the thunderous roar of race cars at top speed, whizzing around the track — this is motor racing. For fans of the sport, few things compare to the thrill of a live race and the heart-pumping passion that permeates the crowds. But car racing is not the only sport The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club celebrates.

“Anything with an engine excites us. We’re enthusiasts of all types of racing,” said club President Tony Kennea, also known as crew chief.

The club is well established and continues to pick up speed, with new members joining monthly.

“Last month we had six newcomers join us, and the same for the previous month,” Kennea said. “I feel very privileged to run the club. I believe we are very flexible to take in all motor sports, not just cars,” he said.

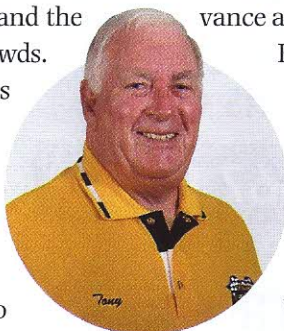
So what is it about racing that Villagers find so intriguing?

“I think it’s the thrill of following teams and certain drivers,” Kennea said, “and watching them progress throughout their careers. It’s good to see them mature, advance and become famous.”

Kennea said the club has evolved over a decade.

“We are former drivers, motor sports fans and people who participated in all forms of racing — not just NASCAR. We have members who enjoy sprint cars. They come in all different categories.”

The club was formed in 2006 when Villagers saw their common interest in motorsports could lead to exciting outings, excursions and camaraderie. And over the years there have been many of those events — from trips to Daytona International Speedway to stock car events and local gatherings at area recreation centers. Whenever the rubber hits the road, this club comes to watch.



**Tony Kennea**





It's more fun with a group, members said. And what a group it is. In October 2016, members celebrated their 10th anniversary.

"We have about 10 members who were charter members," said Wendy Touchette, vice president of the club and a Village of Sunset Pointe resident. Among them is Silky Meegan, a Village of Sabal Chase resident who is amazed at the growth of the club. Approximately 150 members are now active in the group, and reminiscing is a regular pastime.

"Every month we look back at what happened in previous years," Kennea said. "We put together presentations and enjoy seeing how far we've come."

Like many who are in the club, Kennea has been fond of the sport since his youth.

"I was about 5 years old," Kennea said, "and I had an uncle who was a fan in England. He took me to the Goodwood Circuit (a historic venue for motorsports). We lived close to the circuit, so it was easy to make the trip there."

Living in England, Kennea followed Formula One because it was big in Europe.



**Legendary driver Jack Hewitt speaks to members of The Villages Motor Racing Fan Club**



"Here NASCAR is more popular at the moment. But the tide is turning. Formula One is catching on," he said. "It was loud and dangerous. Seeing the lack of protection for drivers in those days was alarming. There were no seat belts, and so many drivers raced in a collar and tie. For example, Mike Hawthorn always wore a bow tie. A Formula One world champion racer, Hawthorn lost his life in a road accident. Then, people believed that solid cars were safe, but the opposite is true. Solid does not equal safe."

Guest speakers are always welcome, Kennea said.

"While we strive to have a number of stars and spokespeople from the world of motor racing join us to share their experiences, we've entertained some unexpected speakers. Last month we talked jet skis, and previously, monster trucks. We've addressed stock car racing on dirt and asphalt, drag racing, sports car racing, and even airplane and boat racing, proving that we are truly generic motorheads. After all, racing is racing," he said.

As far as the year ahead goes, Kennea said the club has plans to stay on track.

"We'll do regular outings at local tracks. We'll continue to make runs to Gainesville to watch the drag races. We'll rent buses and just have a good time with our group. If you're looking for us, we're easy to spot. We always wear yellow," he said. "And of course, we'll be welcoming new members. We meet the first Wednesday of every month at the Colony Cottage Recreation Center. Anyone interested may call me."

#### THE MOTOR RACING FAN CLUB

FOR INFORMATION, CALL TONY KENNEA AT 352-603-9197 OR VISIT [VILLAGESRACINGCLUB.COM](http://VILLAGESRACINGCLUB.COM).

