

IN THEIR SHOES



Craig and Cynthia Carlson

Aaron and Carrie Petersen

Richard and Shari Evans



DEER VALLEY RACQUET CLUB

by: Faisuly Scheurer

When something bad happens to someone, many people usually say "It is all for the best," "Everything happens for a reason," or "God has a plan." While using one of these clichés may or may not offer comfort to someone going through a major tragedy, hidden in them is a very real truth. However, it is in deciding how we are going to behave and what we are going to do *after* tragedy strikes that will decide our future. So, while all of the above phrases will always be thrown around for lack of having something more original to say, it is what we do as a result of tragedy that will decide if they are our truth. Option one: languish in self-pity....FOREVER. Option two: Get back up, shake the dust off, and DO SOMETHING (after languishing in self-pity for a *little* while.) Craig and Cynthia Carlson and their two sons chose option two after a forest fire swept through their Lake Arrowhead community in California back in 2007 and destroyed their home. Luckily, no one in their family got hurt. After trying to decide on whether or not to rebuild, they opted to start anew and chose Boone, North Carolina as their backdrop for a new life.

It was also during this time that friends Richard and Shari Evans were also looking for a change. After being a financial advisor for 20 years, Richard wanted a change of pace and the family decided on making Boone their new home as well. They soon acclimated to living in the High Country; Richard and Shari's twin sixteen year olds signing up for the Watauga High School tennis team. The Carlson family is also big on tennis and after making their big move to Boone from California, both families set about to search for their "tennis central." This is when they came across the Deer Valley Racquet Club, unfortunately, what they found left much to be desired.

The Deer Valley Racquet Club had been around for 22 years, and although owners Ray and Billie Howell had done a great job designing the space, over the years, they began to focus on other things. By the time the Carlson and Evans families went by the club to check it out, Ray and Billie's heart just wasn't there anymore. They had gotten rid of the tennis pro years before and never replaced him, so there was no official instructor. This also left the remaining members on their own, having to set up their own matches and tournaments. With lack of maintenance the facilities had fallen into disrepair and with no other activities being offered, memberships had fallen by two thirds. It was in March of 2009 that both families got together and purchased the club from the Howells. "We had no plans to buy a tennis club, but I have a whole family full of tennis players and we knew even before moving here we needed to have a tennis home," Richard said on my last visit to the club. While the place needed work, it had good bones and was designed well; it just needed updating, maintenance, and lots of TLC.

It was also important for both partners to offer another alternative for fitness and indoor recreation to the community, especially during the winter months. The first thing they did was hire tennis pro Aaron Petersen to head the tennis school and pro-shop. Aaron and his wife, Carrie now own and operate the Deer Valley Racquet and Fitness Club pro-shop. Besides the club now offering a place where their members can get their tennis equipment and accessories, they also began to offer clinics, private lessons, tournaments and social events. And they didn't just get anybody; Aaron is a USPTA Professional who was MVP and Team Captain during

his years at Queens College in Winston Salem. Not only has this put the club on the map, but with the ASU's women's tennis team making it their weekly practice destination, they now boast a league with 12 teams that compete. DVRC is also serving as the training home to the local Special Olympics tennis team.

In the mean time, much needed cleaning and maintenance began to take place. Besides getting a major cleaning from top to bottom, the outdoor pool got recoated and the indoor tennis courts got resurfaced. Currently there are six outdoor tennis courts that include two clay courts and there are plans for the future addition of more outdoor clay tennis courts. Both families are doing everything they can to make a membership at the club more enjoyable and convenient. With all of these changes in the first eight months of their ownership and little advertising, the number of memberships at the club went back up into the 300's. Touring the facility I got the feeling that a breath of fresh air had arrived at the club and things were only going to get better. While tennis is still the focus of the club, both families realize the importance of having a complete fitness program to offer members. Even though the club already offers a room with decent nautilus equipment, future plans include updating current machines and adding new ones like spin bikes. There is also a separate weight room that is available for their members to use. The indoor pool offers members and families with a much needed amenity during the cold winter months of the High Country. With all of these changes, it is the little extras that will not only win over new members, but keep the current ones coming back.

A new child care center has recently been added that offers child care two nights and two mornings per week. They are also placing more emphasis on the fitness component of the club by adding classes like yoga, Pilates, cardio kickboxing, and classes like belly dancing. Deer Valley Racquet Club also boasts one of two racquetball courts that exist in Boone. Their men's and women's locker rooms come fully equipped with steam showers and saunas. They even have a lounge complete with pool table for members to relax while waiting for their lesson or class to begin. Perhaps the biggest surprise to the members is that there had been a full bar and restaurant facility on the premises. In its 22 year history, the restaurant only operated a total of 8 months. Plans are under way to open it to members and the public in the next couple of months as The Penny Lane Pub, and English style bar and restaurant.

With all of these changes the future looks promising for the Deer Valley Racquet Club. With affordable full tennis or fitness memberships, all the amenities and activities the club offers, as well as the dedication and passion by the Carlson's and the Evans families to make the club welcoming to its members, it looks like the number of memberships will continue to rise. Their commitment and their desire to add something that will be of great benefit to the community has helped them overcome their personal tragedy. With everything that has happened in their lives in the last two years, it looks like the old clichés do apply to them after all: It all *did* happen for the best, things *did* happen for a reason, and God certainly *did* have a plan. For more information, visit www.deervalleyclub.com or call at 828-262-3337.