



Joan and Charlie Wicker prepare to sample the cake they were presented at the Tucson Racquet Club in recognition of their winning the Kendler Award.



The Wickers in a more familiar setting: In front of a greaseboard as they work at the East Lansing nationals last year.

Wickers' unstinting work ethic earns R.W. Kendler Award

Unbeknownst to Charlie and Joan Wicker, longtime friend and extraordinaire Sue Delaney organized an effort to award the Wickers the R.W. Kendler Award. "It's been a long time coming," Delaney said at a gathering of Tucson players Nov. 18 at the Tucson Racquet Club's handball league-ending banquet.

Of course, Charlie and Joan Wicker organized the league five years ago and are still the reasons for its success.

"A lot of people have helped," Delaney said. "Most of them being the ones who also volunteer at the tournaments, as they are the only ones who know how hard Charlie and Joan work to make the players happy."

It's been 20 years since the Wickers began to help organizing the national championships, and it was another decade before that when Joan became involved in her husband's athletic passion.

"Hey, I knew I could either get involved in his interests or we could have different outlets," Joan said. "I decided to be a part of his sports interests, and it's been great."

Somehow, everyone involved kept the Kendler Award a secret, and the Wickers were very surprised when a huge cake was the special dessert at the handball banquet. The 9-by-12 photo of the smiling couple working the tournament desk in East Lansing was the last section to be cut.

"I had no idea," Charlie said of the announcement.

The award will be announced officially at this year's nationals in Portland, Ore. Even though the secret's out, don't let that stop you from enjoying the banquet to honor them this June.