

# History of the Segway Riders Club of The Villages

Tom and Barbara Davis, Founders

Dave and Sandy Holzapfel, Segway of Central Florida

Tom and Barbara Davis have always had a spirit of adventure and a passion for trying new things. Dave and Sandy Holzapfel share the same desire in finding fun, new things to try. Their stories are truly an example of “it’s a small world”. And it is interesting how their paths eventually crossed.

## Dave and Sandy

Dave and Sandy were in Mt. Dora in 2007 to do a Segway Tour. Riding a Segway was something they had seen and decided they wanted to try. Dave said, “It was love at first ride!” So much so that Dave and Sandy decided they had to have a “personal transport unit” (what a Segway was referred to at the time) of their own. It was Sandy who said they should probably get two units because she wasn’t going to share hers! So Dave and Sandy bought two PTUs from the couple who owned the small Segway business in Mt. Dora. They were so hooked on these units that they took them out every weekend with most weekends riding in Mt. Dora.

Over time Dave and Sandy got to know the owners of the business in Mt. Dora. The owners, along with their son, had purchased the small business a couple of years earlier. It was a modest business only having about four units at the time. The owners were already retired so when their son moved back to Texas, they were anxious to sell the business. This of course interested Dave and Sandy. Dave, having worked for the same company for thirty years, said that things were getting a little stale and that it might be a good time for a change. So, in February, 2008, Dave and Sandy bought the company and began building their fleet. It soon grew to fifteen units.

## Tom and Barbara

Always looking for a new adventure, the Segway had already captured Tom Davis’s imagination. An article written for the Daily Sun (February 20, 2009), states that Tom got to ride his first Segway about a year earlier in Mt. Dora. Renting Segways allowed Tom to experience different models. Tom was so excited about the Segway and had so much fun riding it that he decided he wanted to start a club in The Villages. Guess you are wondering if he rented his first Segway from Dave and Sandy. That answer would be a “no”; they had not met just yet.

## Creating the Segway Rider’s Club

Initially, The Villages was skeptical about having this type of club. They weren’t really excited about having Segways riding around on the roads. Evidently, there had been some negative interaction with a Segway business in Ocala and The Villages and there were some hard feelings

left between them. Tom and Barbara had to do some damage control. Tom talked with John Rohan about starting a club and Mr. Rohan was supportive of the idea. Tom and Barb set out to complete the required paperwork proposing the new club, filling out the proper forms and collecting the signatures needed that showed interest.

### First meeting

Tom now needed to find a dealership that would support the club. He knew not many Villagers who owned their own Segway and was concerned about how that would affect the club. The dealership in Ocala did not seem interested so Tom began researching elsewhere.

The first time Tom met Dave was when he contacted him in Mt. Dora and told him about wanting to start a club. Dave was very interested in what Tom was proposing and was interested in coming to The Villages to check it out. Tom took Dave on a grand tour!! Dave told Tom that he would indeed be interested in sponsoring the club as long as the club developed safety guidelines and did some kind of fundraising activity.

### Almost ready

In reviewing the paperwork and organization of this new club, Pam Henry recognized that this new club showed responsibility in that it would be a participating member in other Villages events and fundraise for a cause. The club was approved and on its way thanks to the efforts of Tom and Barbara Davis and the support of Dave and Sandy Holzapfel.

### On our way

On Wednesday, February 18, 2009, The Segway Club had its first meeting at Hibiscus Recreation Center. Eight new members, including Tom and Barbara, attended this meeting. Tom and Barbara were everything to the club at that time: the club leaders, committee chairs, trip organizers, chief cook and bottle washer, etc. Club funds were very limited. The idea of the club was to meet once a month and to plan group rides throughout the month. Safety guidelines were developed. These included wearing a helmet and participation in a "boot camp" where new riders could learn to develop the skills to ride the Segway safely. Every Tuesday, at the time, Tom and Dave offered lessons. The Florida Carriage Museum and Resort, Weirsdale, Florida (now known as the Grand Oaks Resort and Carriage Museum) was used for boot camp and tours. The grounds offered a great place to learn to ride because of its paved roads and dirt trail ways that weren't heavily traveled. This area was used until it changed ownership in 2011. Boot camp then moved to Mt. Dora.

In 2013, Tom and Barb began to remove themselves from the organization and worked toward the development of By-laws and a Board of Directors structure. In January 2014, the Club began operation under a set of By-laws adopted by the membership with a President, a set of officers, and an eight-member Board. The By-laws were revised in summer, 2015. Among the many changes was the addition of the Membership Director as a Board member. The Segway Club was exploding at this time, due in part to increased interest generated by our participation in The Villages Outdoor Expo and the Segway Experiences at Seabreeze Recreation Center. As interest grew, so did membership, which prompted more involvement in our seasoned

members in creating committees to meet our growing needs. An example of a new committee is the Exploration Committee. In early 2014, Dave agreed to provide two Segway units to the club in order to explore new ride locations. The Exploration Committee now explores, develops and leads/narrates our rides at various urban and rural locations in Central Florida. This shift relieved Dave of a significant responsibility and permitted the Club to take more ownership in ride locations and content.

### Our charity and fundraising

When our club got involved in fundraising, Dave suggested Seg4Vets. Dave had had some experience with this national organization. Tom and Barb followed up with a contact to see what the club could do to help veterans with mobility needs. From the beginning, our club has raised monies through our bi-annual Segway Experience, which has a two-fold purpose: offering people an opportunity to experience riding the Segway and raising monies to buy a Segway for a veteran who would benefit from such a device. The Segway Experience is held in March and in November. In 2015, the Club decided to shift our fundraising efforts away from the national organization and work with Local Chapter 150 Disabled American Veterans to award Segways to mobility impaired Veterans in The Villages. To date, we have donated over \$35,000 to the national organization, Segs4Vets, and have donated three Segway units (one each year) to local veterans starting in 2015.

### A Vision realized

The development of our club into the organization it is today has been a labor of love. At the time of its conception there was no way of knowing where all of this was going. What could go wrong? Absolutely nothing. As our club grows, it expands and develops seamlessly to meet the needs of our members. Our club has an efficient network of supporting members taking on all types of tasks: officers, committee chairs, trainers, and volunteers keep our club moving forward. From the original eight members, including Tom and Barbara, we have grown close to 300 members in just eight years (as of this writing). And as we grow, Dave and Sandy's involvement and support in/with us has equally grown.

We owe Tom and Barbara Davis a big thank you for taking those first, major steps in creating the Segway Riders Club of The Villages. Their vision, enthusiasm, dedication, and persistence planted the roots for our club. Moreover, for several years after, Tom and Barbara worked tirelessly to advance our club and its membership. And we owe Dave and Sandy Holzapfel a big thank you for jumping in with both feet and supporting us with their time, expertise, patience, and equipment. Today, the partnership between The Segway Riders Club of The Villages and Dave and Sandy at Segway of Central Florida is stronger than ever, offering an extensive menu of safe and adventurous riding experiences for Village residents. Moreover, for those of us who have been members for a while, this club feels like "family". So, if you are new to the club...welcome to the family!

## The Segway Riders Club Organizational Structure

The development of our organizational structure and the members who have served as officers, members of the board, and committee chairs over the years will be included as part of this history and shared as a link on our website when completed.

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Suggestions, additions, and amendments offered by Tom and Barbara Davis, Dave Holzapfel, Ken Redding, Art Timko, Tom Kroener, and Steve Stein.

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