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## Passion for foosball put to good use

**By Mary Maraghy**

*Clay County Line staff writer*

In 1999, Tyler Tornello was a foreman for an irrigation company that was installing a sprinkler system at the newly built Quigley House.

Tornello knew Quigley House was Clay County's domestic violence shelter but that's all he knew.

During the four-day job, he was impressed with the cedar-chipped playground.

"Then I thought some more, and I realized I don't want anybody to have to use this playground because that would mean they were staying here, due to no fault of their own," he said. "Every time I walked by that playground, it hit me. Commitment came out of me. I wanted to give to Quigley House."

And give, he has, more than \$27,000 to his newfound charity of choice through his obscure sport of choice -- foosball, also known as table soccer.

Foosball, big in the 1970s, is making a comeback. Two or four players can play and the object is to put a ball into the opponent's goal using plastic men on rods that spin.

"It helped me endure winters in Ohio during college," said 47-year-old Tornello, who was born and raised in Youngstown. "I love the sport."

Tornello is a representative for Bonzini, U.S.A., a company that imports foosball tables from France. Tornello has nine tables at his home and wears a golfing glove to play in tournaments around the country.

When Players Grille and Sports Bar opened in Fleming Island, Tornello put two coin-operated tables in the game room and later convinced the restaurant owner to host a tournament, which drew dozens of foosball players from across the East Coast. Tornello recruited businesses to sponsor the event at \$200, \$500 and \$1,000 each. Bonzini set up 10 tables and participants paid \$30 to \$60 in entry fees.

The event raised \$11,400 for Quigley House in 2003 and \$16,482 in 2004.

Television celebrity Dick Clark welcomed and congratulated participants via videotape at the 2004 tournament Feb. 20-22. Tornello was able to get Clark to make the video because he's a good friend of Clark's son.

"I'll have to beat that next year," he said. "I'm not sure how, but I'll come through."

Sharon Youngerman, Quigley House's executive director, attended the 2004 tournament and said she was astounded.

"It was awesome. It's amazing the intensity of the players. Some wore gloves. Some removed the handles and brought their own. These guys take it seriously," said Youngerman, who also is from Youngstown.

Orange Park Mayor Steve Jones also attended.

"I think it's fantastic," he said. "Raising this kind of money."

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Foosball fanatic Tyler Tornello organized a tournament, which attracted players from far and wide, and raised money for Clay County's domestic violence shelter.

MARY MARAGHY/The Times-Union

### Helping next year

Organizers are seeking sponsors for next year's Florida State Table-Soccer Championship. For more information, call Tyler Tornello at 703-8887 or go to [www.jacksonvilletablesoccer.com](http://www.jacksonvilletablesoccer.com).