

High Wind Warning

issued for [NW Blount](#), [Blount Smoky Mountains](#)

IN EFFECT UNTIL FEB 26, 4:00 p.m.

## Tellico Village looks for a fresh start

By Josh Flory

Posted February 17, 2013 at 4 a.m., updated February 19, 2013 at 10:26 a.m.



PHOTO BY AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS // [BUY THIS PHOTO](#)

AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS/NEWS SENTINEL Joan Bowen competes during a pickle ball match at the Chota Recreation Center in Tellico Village on Feb. 7. The game is a cross between badminton, tennis, and ping-pong.

Plenty of residential communities offer golf or boating. At Tellico Village, some property owners have indulged a new pastime in recent months — brand management. The Loudon County waterfront community that caters to retirees has launched a new marketing campaign that relies heavily on the work of residents themselves.

*(Continued on page 2)*



PHOTO BY AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS // BUY THIS PHOTO

AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS/NEWS SENTINEL  
Jim Marotta, left, and John Winslow compete during a pickle ball match at the Chota Recreation Center in Tellico Village on Feb. 7. The Tellico Village Pickleball Club has more than 350 members.



PHOTO BY AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS // BUY THIS PHOTO

A view of some Tellico Village properties seen from the Yacht Club on Feb. 7.

Besides singing the Village's praises, the campaign indirectly highlights the challenge facing communities like it: How to build awareness among the next generation of retirees in the face of competition from newer developments.

John Cherry, a spokesman for the Village's property owners association, said the marketing preparation began in earnest about a year ago, and included the recruitment of 20 to 30 residents — known as "Villagers" — with professional experience in fields such as marketing and real estate. Knoxville-based advertising firm The Tombras Group was hired to lead a \$400,000 campaign that includes a new website, magazine ads and a "tour discovery" package that allows visitors to play golf, eat at the Yacht Club and get a tour from a Villager.

Last September, more than 100 Villagers participated in a photo shoot to support the effort, and the community's website features a video with testimonials: "There's always someone asking you over for dinner or cocktails or (to) join a poker group," said one man.

If anything, the full-court press is reminiscent of a recruiting blitz launched by a college football program. While the target market is different, the objective is the same — convincing people your community is the best place to call home.

"It's an emotional decision when you're trying to make some determination where you're going to spend the rest of your life," said Joe Bogardus, a Villager who moved to East Tennessee from Chicago, and has participated in the marketing campaign. "If you're going to leave your home and move someplace, there's a lot of things that go into that on an emotional side. 'Am I going to fit in? Am I going to make friends?'"

With no state income tax, a moderate climate and an abundance of lakes and mountains, East Tennessee has become a hot spot for retirees looking to start over.

Tellico Village, a project of Arkansas-based Cooper Communities, was launched in the mid-1980s and has been one of the most prominent standard-bearers for that growth. Marian Schaffer, founder of SoutheastDiscovery.com, a real estate website aimed at retirees and second-home buyers, said that "the way they structured their entire community worked very well for long-term growth and that's exactly what happened."

Schaffer — who does not have a direct financial relationship with Tellico Village, but does make referrals to a real estate agent who lives in the community — said one challenge for Tellico Village is that the community's housing stock is older.

*(Continued on page 3)*



PHOTO BY AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS // BUY THIS PHOTO

Janet Winslow waits for the serve during a pickle ball match at the Chota Recreation Center in Tellico Village on Feb. 7. The game is played on a badminton-sized court using a ball similar to a wiffle ball.



PHOTO BY AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS // BUY THIS PHOTO

AMY SMOTHERMAN BURGESS/NEWS SENTINEL  
A view of some Tellico Village properties seen from the Yacht Club on Feb. 7.

"The challenge that they face going forward is how do they attract the newly retired retiree, and how do they attract that market that is looking for newer housing stock?" she said.

The new marketing campaign could be a good thing, she said, adding that Villagers are looking at "How can we attract the retirees of today? How can we bring new blood into our community?"

Tellico Village faces plenty of competition from newer communities across the Southeast, although in East Tennessee many of those upstarts have faced challenges of their own.

Tennessee National, another waterfront golf community in Loudon County, was hard-hit by the economic downturn and in recent years advertised lots at steep discounts.

Maryville-based development firm Rarity Communities has been besieged by foreclosures and legal problems at developments including Rarity Club, in Marion County and at Rarity Pointe, in Loudon County.

The latter development was sold at foreclosure last year in the face of complaints about unfinished amenities, and it has been relaunched by its new owners under the name WindRiver.

Joseph Ayres, the president of the firm that bought the project, said his company is looking to move toward a full lifestyle community rather than one focused on retirees, and is developing a new master plan aimed in part at determining what kind of amenities to build.

He said new billboards will appear next month, but emphasized that any marketing campaign won't make promises until the ownership group is prepared to move forward.

"Too many people were promised too many things in the past, and ... they were disappointed or got burned because things were not delivered," Ayres said. "And so we want to make sure that we do it right."

In fact, the maturity of Tellico Village may be a selling point when taken in that context.

Besides its existing amenities — including three golf courses and a wellness center — the community plans to add an eight-court "pickleball" complex, to supplement its existing four courts.

A popular game among retirees, pickleball is a tennis-like game in which players use a paddle to hit a wiffle-style ball over a net.

"We think it's a point of advantage to be able to say that our amenities are here," said Cherry, the spokesman for the Tellico Village POA.

"We don't have a 'Coming Soon' sign on our tennis courts, on our golf courses."