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News & Opinion from Sisters, Oregon

Pickleball tourney set for Sisters

By Sue Stafford

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A **pickleball** round robin tournament is scheduled for Saturday, June 18, as a way of saying thank you to the Sisters Country **Pickleball** Club (SCPC) members for all their support with the club's mission to spread the joy of **pickleball** in the Sisters community through clinics, tournaments, and providing places to play.

Two tournaments are being offered for two different levels of players. Levels 2.4 – 3.4 will play from 9-11 a.m. and levels 3.5 – 4.5 will play 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The tournaments will be held on the high school and middle school tennis courts. There will be a photo op of supporters wearing their SCPC T-shirts at 11.

Pickleball is a simple paddle game played using a perforated, slow-moving ball (like a whiffle ball) over a tennis-type net on a badminton-sized court. The paddle is about 15 inches in length, with a broad face and short handle. Paddles are made of wood, carbon fiber, or graphite. The rules are simple, and the game is easy for beginners to learn. **Pickleball** is played either as doubles (two players per team) or singles. The same size playing area and rules are used for both singles and doubles.

It was invented in 1965 by three dads on Bainbridge Island, Washington.

Sign-ups for the tournaments are available now and are limited to 16 per level. Anyone who would like to participate can become a member and play for \$15. Sign-ups are available at <https://sisterspickleballclub.com/membership%2Fdonations>. Those who are already members can play for free but must sign up.

Board president Bruce Carpenter shared that as of February 16, 2022, **pickleball** is the fastest growing sport in the nation for the second year in a row, growing by 39.3 percent. Recently, the national **pickleball** body, the USAPA, reported growth to 4.8 million players and nearly 40,000 courts nationwide. The sport is recognized and played in 68 countries.

A count last year identified 93 private courts and 49 public courts in Central Oregon. Of those, 37 were indoor courts. Sisters and Madras are the only two cities without public courts, but the Madras Parks Department is working on a public court option next to the swimming pool.

There are currently no existing public City courts in Sisters. As of May, the SCPC has 140 members, growing steadily with one-to-two new members a week. The SCPC continues to seek a location suitable for courts and one that will be a good neighbor to the community. Ideally, they are interested in eight **pickleball** courts to support tournament play. Eight courts require less than a one-half-acre footprint. Eight **pickleball** courts take the same footprint as two tennis courts. Like any park, courts would need restrooms and parking, so an acre or more would be able to accommodate everything. The club is looking for suitable available property.

Funds for public courts could come through a variety of sources. The Club is currently a committee of Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD), so any donations would be to a nonprofit and would be tax deductible.

"We are fortunate to be partnered with Sisters Park & Recreation District to fulfill our commitment to our Sisters community to build eight public courts and to offer **pickleball** clinics and events," said Lori Chase, SCPC vice president.

To make a donation, go to the club's website to support their efforts at www.sisterspickleballclub.com. They have received two grants so far; a \$1,000 Momentum grant from Citizens4Community and a \$2,000 grant coming from

COVID funds from SPRD to provide **pickleball** opportunities for the Sisters community.

There are also economic development and civic grants. SPRD has one of the lowest property tax rates of Central Oregon cities and towns. If the rate was increased, SPRD would be able to better serve the recreational needs of the entire community, not just **pickleball**. The current rate is one-quarter of Bend's \$1.46 per thousand.

So where do club members play if there aren't any public courts? Members who live at Black Butte Ranch, Tollgate, Sage Meadow, and Aspen Lakes play at their private courts. Others travel to Redmond or Bend for outdoor courts and to the **Pickleball** Zone or Widgi Creek for indoor opportunities. This winter, the Sisters Community Church opened their gym with three courts available three times a week for indoor play at \$20 for two hours.

The SCPC has held discussions with the [Sisters School District](#) regarding use of the two tennis courts located at the elementary school, but due to the eventual construction of a roundabout at Highway 20 and Locust Street, which would take the land on which the courts sit, that option is not a permanent fix.

Clark Brody, Black Butte Ranch representative to the SCPC board, said that according to Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Judy Trego the average amount spent, per person, by an overnight visitor, is \$246. Many **pickleball** enthusiasts plan their trips around available **pickleball** facilities. If **pickleball** courts cause visitors to select Sisters over locations without sport facilities, or they extend their stay additional days, the economic impact is positive.

Eight public courts in Sisters would allow SCPS to offer major tournaments, which would provide enough profit to maintain the courts.

Carpenter reported that he just helped Rev. Sibi Poulouse Palluppetta at St. Edward the Martyr Catholic Church tape off the lines for a **pickleball** court on the parking lot behind the church. The court will be open to the public. Check the TeamReach app for pickup games.