



## Sisters pickleball players find a way to play

By Sue Stafford

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The expanding national popularity of pickleball has created a 650 percent increase in the number of players over the last six years, according to the USA Pickleball Association. Currently that number stands at 3.1 million and is growing rapidly year-over-year.

The game of pickleball combines elements of tennis, badminton, and ping-pong. It is played on a court the size of a badminton court, with a low net similar to tennis. The paddle looks like an oversized ping pong paddle and is used to hit a whiffle ball. It was invented in 1965 by three dads as a way to entertain their children during summer vacation.

The West Coast (WA, OR, CA) is home to the largest number of "core" players (play eight or more times a year). Sisters is home to a dedicated group that has been playing consistently, year-round, for the last three years.

Of all the areas in Central Oregon, Sisters has the fewest courts and no public courts. The dedicated **Sisters Country Pickleball Club** (SCPC), the "club without courts," has been working over the past year to change that. After knocking on a number of doors, Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) has welcomed them with open arms to become one of their committees.

The club made a proposal to SPRD and the [Sisters School District](#) regarding making one of the tennis courts at the elementary school into four permanent pickleball courts, available to the public as well as for instruction for physical education classes.

"A group of motivated pickleball advocates and the Sisters Park & Recreation District have come together from Sisters Country to promote the construction of public courts to benefit our schools and community. We are a strong, positive team who plan to spread the joy of pickleball. Our community will benefit by staying active, building community, making new friends, and having fun," explained avid pickleballer Lori Chase, one of the proponents for courts.

The steering committee for SCPC includes: Clark Brody, president; Bruce Carpenter, vice president; Robin Lewis Kane, secretary; Vivian Bousquet, treasurer; Lori Chase, advisor Tollgate; Bill Benson, advisor Black Butte; and Riley McHugh, advisor Sage Meadow.

SCPC will provide the money for repairing, resurfacing, and putting into place the four courts. There will be no cost to the school district, and they will maintain ownership of the courts.

Club president Brody told The Nugget, "We want to contribute something our community will benefit from. Not just elders, but everyone. We want to work with the school kids, too. Pickleball provides real positives for people. It is a fun, healthy way to stay active while meeting new people."

The SCPC is beginning fundraising efforts as one of the vendors at the Sisters Fika Coffeehouse Craft Bazaar and Wine Tasting occurring Friday, November 8, 2 to 8 p.m. Wine tasting will run from 5 to 7 p.m. Featured artists who have donated their handiwork for the fundraising effort include: Bob Bousquet, wooden wine bottle stoppers and boxes; Kate Kopec, designer bags; Steve Mathews, art cards; Lori Chase, wool mittens and hats; Jane Kempvane, earrings to match Chase's hats; Char Ouelette, fine jewelry; Sue Durbin, nightlights; and Bruce and Beth Carpenter, trivets.

The club's first goal has been accomplished – to seek a partnership in providing Sisters' first public pickleball courts. They and SPRD are currently seeking bids for upgrades to the east tennis court at the elementary school. With an affordable bid, and successful fundraising, the club hopes to have the four courts ready for play as early as next spring.

Because of the eventual placement by ODOT of a roundabout at the intersection of Highway 20 and Locust Street, adjacent to the courts, SCPC is not seeking to do any more than the four courts, which may end up being removed. The best estimate provided by ODOT for implementation of the roundabout project is five years from now. The club believes the investment in the four courts is worthwhile and, in the interim, other court opportunities may become available.

Throughout Central Oregon there are 85 outdoor pickleball courts and 37 indoor. In Sisters, 14 are outdoor and belong to communities. As part of the mission outreach by Sisters Community Church and congregants Bruce and Beth Carpenter and Jim and Karen Freeman, there are three indoor courts marked on the floor of the gym at Sisters Christian Academy. They are available on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Outside courts include: Aspen Lakes, two; Black Butte Ranch, four; Pine View Tennis at Sage Meadow – four, Tollgate – 2, and Grand Peaks – 2 (private). Shannon Rackowski teaches pickleball at the elementary school on Sunday afternoons.

Sisters Community indoor pickle ball play starts Sunday, November 3 at the elementary school gym. The first Sunday of every month from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. is beginners play. Regular play is from 1:30 to 4 p.m.

For additional information call Rackowski at 541-272-0529.

Local pickleball player Riley McHugh will be participating in the Margaritaville USA National Pickleball Championship at Indian Wells, CA, in November.



Cheri Wilson, in front, and Cindy Lowe enjoy playing pickleball at Tollgate. *wphoto provided*

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