

Alton to Open Pickleball Courts Next Week

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - April is National Pickleball Month, and the City of Alton will mark the end of the month with the grand opening of their new pickleball courts on Friday, May 3, 2024.

The pickleball courts are located at Gordon Moore Park. They will be open-play courts that are free and open to the public, though they will sometimes be used for league

competitions. Michael Haynes, the director of Alton's Parks and Recreation Department, said the city will open the courts with a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 9 a.m. on May 3.

"At our core, we're about providing as many recreational opportunities and facilities that we can to the greatest amount of people that we can, and I'm just really excited to be able to offer this to a group that's so widespread now," Haynes said.

Pickleball is the fastest-growing sport in America, with millions of people who play regularly in the U.S. Ruby Berghoff, U.S.A. Pickleball Ambassador for Madison County, said it's been "very rewarding" to watch the sport grow.

Berghoff has advocated for more pickleball courts in the area, and she said she was "intimately involved" with the court expansion at Godfrey's Glazebrook Park and the efforts to build courts in Alton. She said the local pickleball community couldn't be more excited.

"It's just really been very rewarding, especially with Gordon Moore, because that absolutely was a grassroots effort from the beginning trying to talk to people and get interest, get that one going, so we're going to be very excited when that finally opens up," Berghoff said. "Everybody is chomping at the bit. They're ready to get out there and get on those courts because they're going to be state-of-the-art. They will be the nicest courts in this immediate area."

Haynes said the construction of the pickleball courts was finished last fall. In recent weeks, they have completed the surfacing and painting. Nets will be installed in time for the ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 3.

As more players join the game, Berghoff stressed the importance of safety on the courts. She said new players who are "hotdogging it" can be a liability, and she encourages anyone who wants to start playing pickleball to take a class. Berghoff herself offers classes at Senior Services Plus, and you can also take classes at Keasler Recreation Complex in East Alton and the Wood River Recreation Center.

Alton's Parks and Recreation Department will also offer clinics for new players or people who want to try pickleball in a "no-pressure environment," Haynes said. You can find out more about Alton's pickleball courts, the competition schedule and the upcoming clinics by visiting the [official Alton Parks and Recreation Facebook page](#).

"It's really taken off over the course of the last decade or so. We've seen pickleball courts pop up in nearly every city because of the high demand for it," Haynes added. "It's great for not only physical improvement and coordination, but it's also just such a

great social activity for people to get together and have some camaraderie and teamwork and just have fun together.”