



TAP
TO
READ

PICKLEBALL PICKING UP POPULARITY IN WEST CHESTER AND BEYOND

By Matt Beardmore

Once just a fringe activity, pickleball has become the fastest growing sport in the United States. Joey Saylor, managing partner at The Pickle Lodge in West Chester, believes the sport's popularity will remain.

Pickleball was created in 1965 by Joel Pritchard, who became a U.S. Congressman and the Lieutenant Governor of Washington State, and friends Bill Bell and Barney McCallum, as a family activity at Pritchard's home in Bainbridge Island, Washington. The paddle sport, which is commonly referred to as a "combination of table tennis, tennis and badminton," has grown into a sport

now played by nearly 9 million people in the U.S. above the age of 6, according to the 2023 Sports & Fitness Industry Association's Topline Participation Report. The report also indicated that pickleball participation nearly doubled in 2022, increasing by 85.7% year-over-year and 158.6% over three years.

"Pickleball has a longevity that will sustain," Saylor said, "and it's for many reasons – the ease of access, you can play outdoors and indoors, and the growth of the sport is not just with the younger ages. Pickleball gives retirees a way to move around."

Saylor also stresses the importance of the social component of pickleball.

"As a novice player, I am impressed by how strangers who play with and against each other can become friends," he said. "It might sound cliché, but it happens."

Founded in July 2023 by Joe Frank and Mitch Dunn, president and co-founder of the Cincinnati Pickleball Club, The Pickle Lodge has already grown to more than 1,000 members as of October – which Saylor said is

ahead of projections – with players from all over the region, including Northern Dayton, Beavercreek, and Northern Kentucky, joining.

When the 61,000-square-foot facility is fully built-out in late 2023 or early 2024, there will be 17 fenced-in courts, something Saylor said is "a big deal because if it's not fenced in, you end up chasing balls across the courts." There will also be five (potentially six) outdoor courts added in 2024.

The Pickle Lodge caters to players of all ages and skill level, with on-site lessons provided by the Ohio Pickleball Academy.

When completed, the Pickle Lodge will also have a pro shop where you can buy paddles, shoes, balls and everything else needed to play pickleball, a full bar, a Two Cities Pizza Co. restaurant, and two meeting/party rooms for hosting events.

To learn more about The Pickle Lodge, visit <https://thepicklodge.com>.