

Volunteer Pickleball Ambassador Program – Community Q&A

Presented by Missoula Parks and Recreation in partnership 406 Pickleball

We're launching a new Volunteer Pickleball Ambassador Program at FMRP Courts—and we want to make sure you have all the facts.

What is this program all about?

Pickleball Ambassadors is a volunteer-based program designed to support the Missoula pickleball community. Ambassadors will help new players get comfortable, encourage fair court rotation, and serve as a friendly presence to promote positive play.

Why was the program created?

Parks and Recreation and 406 Pickleball heard community feedback: court crowding, inconsistent etiquette, and occasional tension were getting in the way of great play. This program aims to build a stronger, more connected court culture—without adding rules or restrictions.

Why is 406 Pickleball involved?

As a community-based club, 406 Pickleball wants to support a vibrant, inclusive playing environment in Missoula. By partnering with Parks and Recreation, we can help create a court culture that's positive and self-sustaining as the sport continues to grow.

What's the goal?

To create a welcoming, respectful environment for players of all ages and skill levels. The goal is not enforcement but encouragement.

What will ambassadors do?

- Welcome new players and explain the basics
- Encourage fair play and rotation during peak times
- Promote sportsmanship and conflict resolution
- Report safety or maintenance concerns to Parks and Rec
- Help organize informal games or events when needed

Ambassadors are volunteers—not referees or enforcers.

How long are the shifts?

Shifts are flexible. Volunteers sign up for days and times that work for them, typically 1 to 2 hours per shift, a few times a month.

Do ambassadors receive anything for volunteering?

Ambassadors will receive:

- A badge or shirt identifying them as an official volunteer
- Training and tools to handle court situations
- Recognition at an end-of-season appreciation event

This is a volunteer role—no pay, but a lot of community appreciation.

Is this a way for the City to offload responsibility?

No. Parks and Recreation remains responsible for managing the facilities, maintaining the courts, and enforcing official rules. This program adds a human touch to daily court use—it's not replacing city services.

What if I don't want someone telling me how to play?

That's completely fair. Ambassadors are not there to manage or control play. They're there to support players who want help and to encourage positive court interactions. If you don't need that, you likely won't notice a difference—except maybe smoother rotation and less conflict during busy times.

Still have questions?

We'd love to talk. Reach out to:

Missoula Parks and Recreation

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Pickleball Ambassador Program: Myth vs. Fact

Heard a rumor at the courts? Here's the real story.

Myth #1: "This is just a way for the City to start charging us to play."

Fact: There are no plans to apply additional court fees. This volunteer program—created in partnership with 406 Pickleball Club—is about building a stronger court community, not collecting revenue.

Myth #2: "Ambassadors are just there to keep tabs on us."

Fact: Ambassadors are just fellow players who've stepped up to help. They're not tracking anyone or taking notes—just offering a friendly presence to welcome new folks and help things flow when the courts get busy.

Myth #3: "We've been managing fine for years. This is unnecessary."

Fact: Credit where it's due—longtime players built a great culture. However, as more people take up the sport, the Ambassador Program adds light-touch support to help things run better during peak times.

Myth #4: "This is just Parks and Recreation trying to dodge their responsibilities."

Fact: Missoula Parks and Recreation remains fully responsible for court maintenance, improvements, and policy. The Ambassador Program is a volunteer-powered enhancement developed in partnership with 406 Pickleball Club—not a substitute for City services.

Myth #5: "Ambassadors will be telling me what to do."

Fact: Ambassadors are not rule enforcers. They help new players, support fair rotation, and de-escalate tense moments if needed. If you know the ropes, you probably won't even notice they're there.

Myth #6: "This will just create cliques and favoritism."

Fact: The program prioritizes fairness and inclusion. Ambassadors are trained to welcome all players and ensure the courts stay open, friendly, and accessible, regardless of skill level or social circle.

Myth #7: "This is just bureaucracy in a t-shirt."

Fact: It's a neighbor in a t-shirt—volunteering their time to make things better. There's no red tape involved, just community care and a shared love of the game.

Myth #8: "If you really cared, you'd add more courts instead."

Fact: Facility improvements are on a separate track, and yes, they matter. This program was created to address immediate challenges like crowding, etiquette, and new-player support without needing a construction budget. Watch for new pickleball courts at Playfair Park in late summer 2025.

Questions? Comments? Want to get involved?

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