

The dedication of Hillcrest Park Pickleball Courts was a huge success as many Pickleball players and those who want to learn the game attended.

Events began at 7:30 am with attendees lined up at the membership tent ready to join the MVPC. The first five to join received a gift certificate for free Pickleball lessons. Each who joined received membership at a reduced fee. Volunteers Kathy Boussard and Gail Lee signed up thirty-three new members in a few short hours.

The Ballenger's grandsons, Ike and Adam sold ice cream bars and assisted by checking in the forty people who signed up online for free coaching. Twenty more signed up for information on lessons.

For over an hour, all six courts were full to overflowing while six dedicated volunteers gave lessons.

Courts were cleared at 11:00 when the dedication ceremony began with Master of Ceremony Butch Holmberg. Jennifer (park rep) expressed excitement about the well-attended event and appreciation for MVPC for bringing so much activity to Hillcrest Park. Her sentiment was contagious.

Barb McGrady shared about the history of Pickleball in Skagit County. The new sign honoring donors was unveiled and the president of MVPC, Dan Budinski spoke of the donations that made these courts possible. Much appreciation was demonstrated with applause and vocal expressions when Claud Blackburn was acknowledged for his tremendous generosity.

Winners of the recent ladder games were announced and congratulated as medals were awarded. The crowd gave a heartfelt applause.

Raffle tickets were drawn and new members won various Pickleball related gifts.

Gifts of one dozen Franklin X40 Pickleball's were given to the six coaches and eight exhibition players. The crowd gathered at the fence to watch high level players challenge one another. For the next hour or so, expressions of amazement and cheers of support could be heard throughout the crowd of spectators as difficult shots were made to look easy and misses made us all feel better about our own games.

From beginning to end and for weeks prior to the dedication, event coordinator Sue Paulson ensured that equipment and volunteers were in place and working to pull off this event in a smooth and efficient manner.

Melissa Ballenger