

Paddle tennis: Gen X loves it — are you up for a game?

By [Rachel M. Collins](#)

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Greg Campbell has been playing paddle tennis since he was 16 years old.

The 50-year-old York, Maine, resident is such an avid enthusiast, in fact, that over the years he has routinely driven more than an hour away to a club in Massachusetts to play in a paddle tennis league.

It is no surprise then that he and his family were one of the first to step up this past winter when a group in York pulled together the financing to build a paddle tennis court in a rural part of town.

"It's a mixture of tennis — the same principles — an element of racquetball — because you can play off the back screen — and a winter sport you can play outside," Campbell said. "It's just such a great sport."

That's right, the appeal of paddle tennis for many is that it allows you to play a racquet sport outdoors year-round in climates like Maine's.

"In the winter it's so nice to be outside," Campbell said. "It really thickens your blood up and the sport is absolutely addictive."

Campbell should know.

Not only have his three kids — Matt, 17; Andrew, 16 and Emily, 14 — taken to the sport, he has signed on as the chairman of the membership committee at the York Paddle Tennis Club focused on getting the word out to others in the region.

"This is a big sport right now for the yuppie, Generation X group, ages 23 to 40 in places like New York, Chicago," he said. "Nightly suburban leagues have become very popular."

There are thousands of people of all ages playing paddle or platform tennis around the country.

In fact, it's estimated that in the United States there are about 4,000 courts, 8,000 APTA members, 17 regional leagues, dozens of certified pros, more than 100 sanctioned tournaments and 26 annual national championship events.

And because the enclosed, elevated aluminum deck, about one-quarter the size of a regulation tennis court, has a heating system in its base it allows those who live in colder climates to play year-round.

"It's actually typically a winter sport," Campbell said. "It's appealing to those who want to play a winter sport and a racquet sport."

For those who already have some racquet skills, he said it is just a matter of adapting the sport they already play to the smaller court with the 12-foot-high screened walls.

Platform tennis is typically a doubles sport, as well, with two players on each side of a 34-inch-high

net.

"Another thing about the game is that the ball itself is somewhere between the size and density of a tennis ball and a lacrosse ball," Campbell said, while the 18-inch-long paddles are made of a composite material with aerodynamic holes drilled in the head.

All of those changes lend themselves to longer rallies, according to Campbell, who said often the ball is being hit consecutively some 40 to 50 times.

"The kids love it," he said. "I think it's easier to get better at paddle tennis than it is at tennis. It seems you can get better quicker." There is also the social element.

Campbell said his wife, Kate, often brings the dog and cross country skis nearby, while members have had hot chocolate and pot-luck dinners around a cozy fire when the weather is right.

For all of those reasons, Campbell and others at the York Paddle Tennis Club believe the sport is well-suited to the region.

That is why they are inviting prospective members to come take a look this Saturday, Sept. 20 from 2 to 7 p.m. at an open house at the club's court on Mill Lane in York, just west of Route 91 (Cider Hill Road), about a seven-minute drive from Route 1.

Refreshments will be served and prospective members will have an opportunity to meet some of the members and try out the sport.

Campbell said he has already received telephone calls and inquiries from those who have played paddle tennis before — and those who have not — who are interested in joining the club.

Good news since the club's intent, as it adds members, is eventually to build another court and a warming hut.

That way it could host more events including round-robin tournaments and competitions with other clubs.

"A lot of families are starting to join because they want their kids to be involved," he said. "It's such a great winter sport."

And, yes, winter is that season that creeps in after the fall.

Think you or your group should be profiled in Get off the Couch? Contact Rachel Collins at Rcollinsme@aol.com.

GO & DO

The York Paddle Tennis Club will be having an open house Saturday from 2 to 7 p.m. at its facility on Mill Lane in York, Maine. For information about the York Paddle Tennis Club, visit www.yorkcommunitymaine.org/yptc. To find out more about the sport of platform, or paddle tennis, visit the American Platform Tennis Association Web site at www.platformtennis.org.