



**UTICA
ATHLETES
SIGN TO
PLAY AT
COLLEGIATE
LEVEL/8A**

New pavilion constructed near pickleball courts

Resident's donation covered cost

BY SARAH WOJCIK
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SHELBY TOWNSHIP — Thanks to a Shelby Township resident and pickleball enthusiast's \$5,000 donation, players at the three pickleball courts in River Bends Park will be able to take a respite from the game and seek shade.

The Shelby Township Parks, Recreation and Maintenance Department constructed a wooden pavilion and painted it royal blue and white to match the courts last month. The department now is finishing the cement work.

"We'll add the picnic tables and be ready to go for next spring for a big opening of the new pavilion," PRM Director Joe Youngblood said.

See PAVILION on page 16A



Photo provided by Joe Youngblood

The new pavilion by the pickleball courts at River Bends Park was installed last month, courtesy of a donation from Shelby Township resident Ray Snay.

Pavilion

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"It's amazing. We just can't thank Ray Snay enough for this extreme generosity, which will make the pickleball players happy for years and years to come."

Approximately three years ago, Snay, now 70 years old, came to Youngblood with the idea of bringing pickleball to Shelby Township. At the time, he served as a USA Pickleball Association ambassador for southeast Michigan.

Snay began playing pickleball for health reasons in November 2011 and instantly became hooked. The game is played mostly by retirees, he said, because it's easier on the joints, has a smaller court, and the paddles and balls are larger.

The PRM Department converted an existing slab of concrete used only for ice skating in the winter into pickleball courts, constructed poles for the courts in-house, and funded the cost of painting the court and purchasing nets with donations from Shelby Point.

"(Youngblood) gave us some picnic tables, but there's no shade around there," Snay said. "I thought we needed it done, and I thought I would pay for it because the township didn't have the funds or availability to do it at the time."

He called working with the PRM Department an "unbelievable pleasure."

"They helped me in every way, and I've helped them," he said. "There's no trees around there, so they put up (what) I call windscreens, then take them down in the fall and put them back up in the spring for us."

When the weather is nice, Snay said, approximately 25 players are out on the pickleball courts on any given morning. With winter approaching, Snay heads to Fort Myers, Florida, to play pickleball.

"(I stay here in Florida) until the end of April, and I fly back for Christmas," he said. "I'm not that good (at pickleball) at all. I play strictly for fun and exercise. When I get done and if my shirt is completely sweated through, then I've done what I wanted to do."

Snay said he doesn't realize the



Photo provided by Joe Youngblood

A plaque matching the blue and white of the pickleball courts and new pavilion dedicates the pavilion to Ray Snay, of Shelby Township.

game is exercise because it's fun. He said players become like family, cracking jokes and teasing each other.

"When people are playing out there in June, July and August, they'll have picnic tables under there and nice shade in the extreme heat," Youngblood said. "We're just thrilled to have a resident enjoy our park system and want to help beautify it by donating his own money."

River Bends Park is located at 52700 22 Mile Road, west of Shelby Road. For more information, call the Shelby Township Parks, Recreation and Maintenance Department at (586) 731-0300. To find out more about pickleball, visit the official website at www.usapa.org.

Call Staff Writer Sarah Wojcik at (586) 498-1029.