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THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

New teachers welcomed during luncheon

Retired Judge Dehn receives Vocational Service Award

by Rachel Kytonen

rachel.kytonen@apgecm.com

New teachers to the area were honored, while the Rotary Club of Cambridge and Isanti gave out its annual Vocational Service Award, during the 22nd annual New Teacher Luncheon held Aug. 28 at Cambridge-Isanti High School.

The New Teacher Luncheon, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Cambridge and Isanti and the North 65 Chamber of Commerce, allowed area administrators the opportunity to introduce their new teachers to the community. Schools represented at the luncheon included Anoka-Ramsey Community College - Cambridge Campus, Art



Clark Joslin (left) and Greg Carlson (center), with the Rotary Club of Cambridge and Isanti, present retired Isanti County Judge James Dehn (right) with the 2020 Vocational Service Award.

Photo by Rachel Kytonen

and Science Academy, Braham Isanti Public Schools, Rum Area Public Schools, Cambridge River Special Education Cooperative and St. Scholastica HSC

Academy.

The other highlight of the event was the presentation of the Rotary's 2020 Vocational Service Award to retired Isanti County Judge James Dehn, who was chambered in Isanti County since taking the oath of office on June 26, 1987, until his retirement on June 26, 2017. Even though Dehn is retired, he still fills in for sitting judges as needed across the state of Minnesota.

Rotarian Greg Carlson was the master of ceremonies for the luncheon.

"We all recognize that we are living in challenging times under this cloud of a pandemic," Carlson said. "Teachers, school

See **TEACHERS** on page 15

Important notice on free filing statements

The County News Review allows each local candidate one free filing statement. The filing statement can be emailed to rachel.kytonen@apgecm.com and may include a headshot of the candidate.

The filing statement needs to be 350 words or less, and cannot include mention of a candidate's social media pages or websites. The candidate can include an email address and/or phone number if they wish to provide additional contact information in their filing statement. The newspaper reserves the right to edit a filing statement if so desired.

Candidates whose filing period closed on Aug. 11 needs to submit their free filing statement to the newspaper by 4 p.m. on Friday, Sept. 4, for final publication in our Sept. 10 edition. Candidates whose filing period closed on June 2 are no longer entitled to a free filing statement as the deadline has passed. It can only be printed as a paid advertisement. Please contact Shana Bouley at shana.bouley@apgecm.com for advertising information.

The newspaper does not contact candidates directly to submit their free filing statements; we will be contacting candidates directly for our General Election Voter's Guide, which will be published closer to the Nov. 3 General Election.

Isanti Redbirds roll in state tourney

by John Wagner

john.wagner@apgecm.com

Over the years, Steve Allen has made a trip or two to the Minnesota Baseball Association's state tournament.

So when the Isanti Redbirds showed up for a practice last week in preparation for this year's tournament, the manager had a stern warning.

"I told the guys we had to turn [the tempo of] practice up a notch," Allen said. "We couldn't just walk through it. And our guys practiced so hard, so well, I told them that, if they played that way in the tournament, we'd win. And they did."

The Redbirds defeated Wattertown 4-2 in their first game in the Class C State Tournament played Saturday, Aug. 29, at

Springfield. And Allen said that came despite having to deal with a partisan crowd of Red Devil fans who appeared in support of their team, which was making its first state appearance since 2008.

"I had never been in a situation where I'm standing in the coach's box and I couldn't hear, and now I have," Allen said. "They had a great crowd that was right on top of us."

But Isanti wasted no time in silencing that crowd as leadoff batter Jeff Bowman singled, then moved to third before Wyatt Soderquist hit a grounder back to the mound. The Wattertown pitcher bobbled the ball, and that was enough to allow Bowman, who broke for home as the ball was struck, to score the game's first run.

"When we got a run right away in the first inning, that



Jeff Bowman prepares to take a lead off first base. The Redbirds' leadoff hitter had two hits and a walk to spark the Isanti offense.

Submitted photo

knocked them back on their heels," Allen said. "Getting that first run on the board is huge. It allowed our guys to relax."

The Red Devils tied the game with a run in the third off Isanti starter James Green, but the Redbirds responded with a

three-run rally in the bottom of the inning. Bowman again was the catalyst, drawing a walk before a bunt single by Joe Tuholsky put runners on first and second with no one out.

Soderquist singled to drive in Bowman, and Nick Hoffman's two-out, two-strike single brought home the other two runs.

"I really liked that we were able to counter after they scored," Allen said. "Nick's at-bat really was the key at-bat."

That was enough offense thanks to Green, who kept Wattertown off the board until the Red Devils scored a run in the seventh. But the Isanti right-hander choked off the threat and earned the win, finishing with just two hits and one walk

See **REDBIRDS** on page 24

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Fall Sports CROSS COUNTRY | SOCCER | GIRLS TENNIS | VOLLEYBALL

2020 **PREVIEW** Special Section of the **COUNTY NEWS REVIEW**

NORTH BRANCH VIKINGS | RUSH CITY TIGERS | CAMBRIDGE CHRISTIAN WARRIORS

North Branch boys soccer

by John Wagner

john.wagner@apgecm.com

The North Branch boys soccer team opened the season with a scoreless draw with St. Francis – despite coach Jake Borash challenging his team the day before the match.

“Last year we had problems with ‘mental stability’ in terms of playing on, and not worrying about dumb fouls or bad calls against us,” Borash said. “So what I did was put our guys through an intense scrimmage the day before the match, which is far from normal.

“But I did it, knowing we would be sore and tight in this game, to make sure we had a stronger mentality during hard times. And we really did that in this match.”

The Vikings should be an experienced team, thanks in part to having 10 seniors on the roster.

“That’s a nice thing to have, because these seniors have been in the program for several years now,” Borash said.

Senior captain Harry Toussaint and fellow senior Noah Schwartzrock will key the offense, with freshman Drew Detzler also expected to provide a spark.

Goalkeeper Tanner Bollman, a junior who started last year, made several fine saves to preserve the clean sheet against the Saints, while senior Austin Richter is expected to lead on defense.

“We have a lot of scrap, a lot of intensity, a lot of willingness to win 50-50 battles,” Borash said. “We have a good core with a lot of different skills who bring a lot of good things to the table.”



The North Branch boys soccer team opened the season with a scoreless draw against St. Francis, a program that advanced to the state tournament a year ago. *Photos by John Wagner*

Schedule

- Aug. 27, St. Francis, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 1, Cambridge-Isanti, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 3, At Chisago Lakes, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 8, At Becker, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 11, At Cambridge-Isanti, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 14, At Princeton, 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 17, At Big Lake, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 22, Becker, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 25, Monticello, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 29, At St. Francis, 7 p.m.
- Oct. 1, Chisago Lakes, 7 p.m.

North Branch girls soccer

by John Wagner

john.wagner@apgecm.com

Last year the North Branch girls soccer team took a few lumps as coach Josh Kopp worked to establish a culture for his program and the team relied on a fair number of underclassmen.

Now the Vikings hope that patience pays off and allows them to become the ones administering some lumps to opponents.

“We are starting to see the benefits of the foundation we’ve built the past couple of years,” Kopp said. “Our players have been in the program for a couple of years now, and there is a large buy-in as they see the benefits.”

Among the top players this season will be senior Sylvia Linkert, an athletic player who has the ability to play multiple positions on the field, as well as juniors Lilly Johnson, Emmie Meyer and Paris Kopp.

“Last year’s talented underclassmen are now upperclassmen, and they have established themselves as competitive leaders in the program,” Coach Kopp said. “We have a group of new underclassmen that are extremely talented soccer players, and as they continue to grow, they will have a large impact on our ability to compete at a high level.”

Paris Kopp is expected to bring stability and composure to the back line, but the defensive wall may be a concern early in the season as that group learns how to work in unison.

“There are a fair number of newcomers looking to fill out our back line,”



The North Branch girls soccer team expects to reap the benefits of the experience the Vikings have gained from past seasons.

Coach Kopp said. “Getting this group to play together and locking down the back will be a key challenge.”

Schedule

- Aug. 27. At St. Francis, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 1, At Cambridge-Isanti, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 3, Chisago Lakes, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 8, Becker, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 10, Cambridge-Isanti, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 14, At Princeton, 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 18, Big Lake, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 22, At Becker, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 25, At Monticello, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 29, St. Francis, p.m.
- Oct. 2, At Chisago Lakes, 7 p.m.



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The North Branch cross-country team looks to balance fun and work as they rise in the standings of the Mississippi 8 Conference. *Photos by John Wagner*

North Branch cross-country

by John Wagner

john.wagner@apgecm.com

North Branch cross-country coach Norm Nagel has a simple goal for this fall.

“We’re trying to get the kids in better shape despite a shortened season,” he said. “We have a bigger roster than last year, and we don’t have a lot of seniors, so that could be a good foundation for the future.”

“We’re going to keep it fun, and as the season goes on we’re going to sort out what runners we have and where they fit in.”

On the boys side, the Vikings will be led by junior Zach Johnson, the team’s No. 1 run in its season-opening meet at Princeton, along with Lucas Edson, the lone senior on the boys roster, and junior Alex Dick.

“They are upperclassmen who have been in the program for a while, so we will lean on them and fill in the holes behind them,” Nagel said. “We’re hoping to show improvement over last year, but we know we have some work to do.”

For the girls, junior Cora Hudella led

North Branch with a third-place finish against Princeton, while fellow junior Evelyn Demars and sophomore Norah Judson also are expected to be among the team’s top runners.

Two eighth graders who are gymnasts for North Branch, Dakota Engel and Derrian Dick, ran so well in the middle school race at Princeton that they may see varsity time before the season ends.



Schedule

- Aug. 27, At Princeton, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 3, At Chisago Lakes, 3 p.m.
- Sept. 11, At Cambridge-Isanti & Chisago Lakes, 3:30 p.m.
- Sept. 15, At Big Lake & Becker, 4:15 p.m.
- Sept. 24, At Becker & Monticello, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 29, Becker & St. Francis, 4 p.m.
- Oct. 8, Road Mississippi 8 Championship at Becker, 12:30 p.m.



The North Branch girls tennis team returns a number of upperclassmen from last season as the Vikings look to have success in the Mississippi 8 Conference.

North Branch girls tennis

by John Wagner

john.wagner@apgecm.com

The North Branch girls tennis team returns a number of players from last season, including a varsity squad filled with upperclassmen.

“We only graduated three seniors, so a majority of our varsity squad is back,” coach Joel Santjer said. “We also have a lot of leadership back. Our singles lineup is basically shifting up a bit, but the rest of the lineup is mostly the same as last year.”

Senior Chloe Moline, who played second singles for the Vikings a season ago, will move up to the No. 1 singles spot. Other returning leaders for North Branch include last year’s top doubles team of Sophie Smith and Holly Ohnsorg, along with the No. 2 doubles pairing of Rachel Wurdemann and Hailey Bistodeau.

But Santjer hesitates when asked for specific individual leaders on his squad. “All of our upperclassmen are leaders who have really come together,” he said. “This group has been playing together since seventh grade, so they really have gelled. They work well together.”

That experience has led to practices that are more advanced than in past sea-

sons.

“We’ve been able to do a lot of things, practice-wise, that we haven’t been able to do in the past because these girls have been playing for so long,” Santjer said. “We don’t have to focus on how to hit a certain shot; we’ve been able to focus more on moving preemptively and looking at match strategy.”

Santjer said the expectations for this year have not changed from years past.

“The idea is to go out there and have fun and help these girls grow as people,” Santjer said. “Everything after that takes care of itself.”



Schedule

- Sept. 1, St. Francis, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 3, At Cambridge-Isanti, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 8, At Chisago Lakes, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 10, Princeton, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 15, At Big Lake, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 17, Becker, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 22, Monticello, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 24, at St. Francis, 4 p.m.

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While Rush City lost a number of top runners from last season, the Tigers expect to be competitive again this fall. *Submitted photos*



Rush City cross-country

by John Wagner
john.wagner@apgecm.com

Rush City cross-country coach Mike Vaughan may have started practice this season by handing out name tags to his runners.

“We lost 16 seniors from last season, and that may have been the biggest group of seniors we’ve had since I’ve been the coach,” Vaughan said

On the boys side, the Tigers lost about half of the top runners from last year’s Great River Conference champions, but a solid core remains in senior Luke Widenstrom along with juniors Karl Meissner, Joey Papke and Dalton Paul.

“Luke has really stepped forward as far as leadership and summer training has gone,” Vaughan said. “And that’s fun to see.

“We also have some football players who are running with us, and they were strong runners in track. If we can get them in shape, they’re going to be OK.”

For the girls, the graduated senior class took a chunk out of last year’s starting lineup. But one of the returnees is eighth grader Ashland Paul, who was the Tigers’ No. 1 runner a season ago.

“Ashland logged some good summer miles, so I think she’s going to have a pretty good season,” Vaughan said.

Juniors Ashley Schmidt and Greta Rundquist should push for a spot amongst the team’s top runners, but others will need to step up to replace the graduated seniors.

“On the girls side, with a few exceptions, this is a brand-new team,” Vaughan said. “I have a big group of eighth-grade girls, and the numbers in the program are really good. Our goal is to maintain our strength on the varsity side while building up the younger runners.”



Schedule

- Sept. 3, East Central & Pine City, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 10, Braham & Mille Lacs, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 17, Braham & Pine City, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 22, At East Central & Braham, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 28, At Pine City with Hinckley-Finlayson, 4 p.m.
- Oct. 6, At Hinckley-Finlayson with Braham, 4 p.m.

Thompson to lead Rush City boys hoops

by John Wagner
john.wagner@apgecm.com

Rush City High School, he is no stranger to the Tigers program.

“Rush City has a strong tradition in basketball, both boys and girls, over a long period of time,” said Thompson, a 1978 graduate of Chisago Lakes. “I don’t know the boys and the team that well, but I do know they graduated a number of seniors. I know they had some sophomores who saw playing time.

“In open gyms I saw players who are very athletic, so I’m optimistic [about this season]. But I also know the conference is very strong, and the section is even stronger, so I need to temper my optimism because I know we are going to play a lot of good teams.”

Thompson has spent the previous three seasons as the JV boys coach at North Lakes Academy in Forest Lake and also has extensive experience with the youth basketball programs in Menomonie, Wisconsin. He replaces Jeremy Albright, who is the new boys basketball coach at Royalton, his alma mater, after leading the Tigers for the previous 13 seasons.

“I know Jeremy Albright has done a lot of good work with these players,” Thompson said. “I know he was very successful over a long period of time, and it’s difficult to follow a good coach like that.”

Thompson said his style is predicated on doing good work on the defensive end of the court.

“I really like to run and have fun, but I’m first and foremost a defensive-minded coach,” he said. “We’ll play a lot of man, and sometimes we’ll press. But if you can get everyone to play defense, that helps start the offense you want to run. If we have the players, we’ll try to run up-tempo and allow the players to be free and athletic and to have some fun.”

While Thompson said he has seen the Tigers on the court when Rush City played North Lakes Academy, he still wants to learn more about the players on his new team.

“It’s important to find out what they like to do, what their background is, and start building relationship,” he said. “It’s something we’re working on, but right now I’m getting my feet wet.”

That process, of course, has been hindered by COVID-19.

“You’re in an open gym with a mask on trying to communicate with kids,” Thompson said. “Even talking isn’t much fun with a mask on. I think that will be a continuing challenge. That’s why I really hope things go smoothly for the fall sports.”

Thompson said he wanted to thank a number of individuals for the opportunity to lead Rush City’s boys basketball program.

“Lee Rood, the athletic director, has been very gracious in helping me get started,” Thompson said. “I met the two assistant coaches, JV coach Nick Oeltjen and freshman coach Ricky Carlson, and I’m really excited to have those guys. You can tell they have passion for and knowledge about basketball.”



Tryg Thompson is the new boys basketball coach at Rush City after spending the previous three seasons as an assistant at North Lakes Academy in Forest Lake. *Submitted photo*

Good Luck Vikings!

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The Cambridge Christian volleyball team hopes its experienced core will help it contend for a Christian Athletic League title. Photos by John Wagner

Cambridge Christian volleyball

by John Wagner

john.wagner@apgecm.com

The Cambridge Christian volleyball team should be an experienced group this fall as the Warriors return seven juniors and seniors from last season.

But one of the two players lost to graduation was the team's setter from a year ago, so coach Rachel Newton knows a successful season is not automatic.

"The setter is almost like a quarterback in football, and when you have an inexperienced player in that position it takes a lot of practice, a lot of coaching, to make sure they are ready to play," she said. "If they are consistent in their setting, your hitters can run the same routes and will be much more successful hitting."

Among the leading returnees for Cambridge Christian are seniors Rae-lynn LaBeau, a libero who will anchor the defense, and Emily Treichel, who led the team in aces last season.

Another returnee is junior Brooke Simonson, who is transitioning from her role as an outside hitter last year to become one of the team's setters this fall.

"She was one of our leading hitters last year, and she probably will be among the leaders this year because she is so athletic," Newton said of Simonson.

Newton said the Warriors continue to put in the hard work necessary to earn a berth among the upper echelon of teams in the Christian Athletic League this season.

"We had a scrimmage last week, and the girls are really working well together," she said. "There's a lot of good energy, really good synergy, that's happening on the court. They are learning how to communicate with one another, and that is helping this group come together."



Schedule

- Sept. 3, At Willmar, 5 p.m.
- Sept. 10, St. Cloud Christian, 5 p.m.
- Sept. 11, At Fourth Baptist, 5 p.m.
- Sept. 15, Valley Christian, 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 17, At St. Francis Christian, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 18, At Lake Region, 5 p.m.
- Sept. 22, At Chisago Lakes Baptist, 5 p.m.
- Oct. 2, Willmar, 5 p.m.
- Oct. 6, At Foreston, 5 p.m.
- Oct. 13, At Valley Christian, 5 p.m.
- Oct. 17, At Fourth Baptist Spikefest, TBA
- Oct. 19, St. Francis Christian, 5 p.m.
- Oct. 23, At Rochester Area Home School, 7:15 p.m.
- Oct. 27, 30-31, Christian Athletic League Tournament



The Cambridge Christian soccer program is an interesting blend of experienced players and newcomers who hope to compete for the Christian Athletic League title.

Cambridge Christian soccer

by John Wagner

john.wagner@apgecm.com

The Cambridge Christian soccer team has a mixture of both experience and youth that has coach Justin Roble excited for the coming season.

"I've got four seniors and a junior who have played for me for at least three years," Roble said. "But we have a number of first-year players, so we have players on both sides of the spectrum when it comes to experience."

Roble said the newcomers are meshing well with his veteran players.

"Our new players are learning very quickly," he said. "Our experienced players are really pushing them. But they also are stepping up their leadership, whether it's the expectations in our program, the formats of practice, or the concepts of soccer in general. They have been wonderful in doing that."

Among the top players for the Warriors are senior Johan Pankan and junior Josiah Sedler, two upperclassmen who have been in the program since they were freshmen.

"Johan has good strength that allows him to play offense and defense really well," Roble said. "Josiah is a player who is very skilled, and we'll be looking to run a lot of touches and plays through both of them."

Other players to watch include seniors Ryan Simonson, who is expected to contribute on offense, and Hailey Baas, who will play a key role on de-

fense.

"I think we have a well-rounded team in terms of experience, with Pankan and Sedler in the middle, Simonson leading the offense and Baas on defense," Roble said. "I'm excited to see how it comes together."



Schedule

- Aug. 27, Chain of Lakes, 4:30 p.m.
- Sept. 3, At Willmar, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 10, St. Cloud Christian, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 11, Immanuel, 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 15, Valley Christian, 4:30 p.m.
- Sept. 17, At St. Francis Christian, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 18, At Lake Region, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 22, At Chain of Lakes, 4:30 p.m.
- Sept. 24, Foreston, 4 p.m.
- Sept. 29, At St. Cloud Christian, 5 p.m.
- Oct. 2, Willmar, 4 p.m.
- Oct. 6, At Foreston, 4 p.m.
- Oct. 9, Metro United, 4:30 p.m.
- Oct. 12, At Valley Christian, 4:30 p.m.
- Oct. 19, St. Francis Christian, 4:30 p.m.
- Oct. 23, At Rochester Area Home School, 4 p.m.
- Oct. 30-31, Christian Athletic League Tournament



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REDBIRDS

Continued from front

allowed while striking out nine in seven innings of work.

“I went to the mound and asked James how he was doing in the seventh, and he said, ‘I’m gassed,’” Allen said. “Usually when James admits he’s gassed, he’s done. But then he said, ‘I can take this guy.’ He may have been talking himself into it, but he said it with such assurance that I left him in. And he got the out.”

Veteran lefty Phil Bray came out of the Redbirds bullpen and earned the save with two hitless innings, fanning two.

“Phil has been playing amateur ball for a long time, and even though he has played for teams that have made the state tournament, before Saturday he had never played in a tournament game,” Allen said. “He’s always had to work or something else has come up. So it was great to see him finally get his chance.”

Allen said both pitchers also benefited from a stellar defensive performance by the Redbirds.

“Tristen [Zimprich] made another great diving catch in center, while Logan [Kalis] made two terrific plays at third base,” Allen said. “Blaze [Hogie] made just an amazing catch of a foul popup at the edge of our dugout, and Tuholsky and Bowman were solid up the middle. And Nick Hoffman was really good behind the plate.”

With the victory, Isanti advances to the Round of 16 in the state tournament. The Redbirds return to action on Friday, Sept. 4, when they face the Cold Spring Rockies at Milroy in game scheduled to start at 7:30 p.m.

Pickleball league creates enthusiasm

The bumper sticker on the back of Cambridge pickleball player Peiwu Daniels’ car read “Follow Me to Pickleball” and area residents have done just that.

The Cambridge Area Pickleball Association (CAPA) recently conducted a four week doubles league with 26 enthusiastic players taking part.

“A doubles league was a concept I observed while traveling last winter,” said league organizer and CAPA president, Mike Mueller. “Since it involves the same two players each week, it varies from regular games where players rotate. It definitely brought the intensity of play up a level.”

Players self-assess their skills and compete in either an intermediate or advanced section. Action took place on Tuesday evenings with each team playing two matches.

Each match concluded when a team won two of three games to 11. A play-off tournament evening crowned the champions in both



Advanced section winners: First-Place (center) are Clint Lundeen and Stacey Nelson. Second-Place (right) Becky and Brody Bakken. Third-Place (left) Joe Zeleny and Mike Mueller.

Photo submitted

classes. The sight of players moving in their “courtly” dance, the unmistakable sound of the plastic ball hitting the paddle, the groans and shouts of “Nice Shot” were a testament to the growing popularity of the sport. Family and friends circled the courts to cheer on the teams.

The Cambridge Area Pickleball Association was formed in 2019 and is a nonprofit 501c3 corporation. Community supporters include the city of Cambridge, Cambridge-Isanti Schools Community Education, Allina’s Cambridge Hospital and the Cambridge Army National

Guard.

The outdoor playing courts are located at Central Green Park and indoor at the Armed Forces Community Center and Isanti Primary School in the winter season. Four additional courts are under construction at Central Green. Membership in CAPA is currently at 140 including all ages and skill levels A yearly membership is \$10 per person.

For more information visit www.cambridgepickleball.com or stop by the courts.

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