

# Life

## Club Spotlight: Pickleball Club

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The Pickleball Club hosts monthly tournaments for students to help campus stay active and build student connections. With no entry fee or requirements, anyone can join and enjoy playing pickleball with no stress.

Pickleball is a blend of tennis, badminton and table tennis. Two or four players use a paddle to hit the plastic ball back and forth, with underhand serves, to gain points for their team. While some say it's an "old person sport," it's currently one of the fastest-growing sports across all ages.

Maddox Trail, a junior laboratory science major from Rector, Arkansas, is the club's founder and president. He said this club is a more casual version of the intramural pickleball available.

"We just want to introduce them to the sport of pickleball. It's really growing among college age kids. I think it's one of, if not the, fastest growing sport among our age

groups. Introducing it to those people, building community, getting your friends who play pickleball, that's the main goal."

Trail said that to keep the club beginner-friendly, they don't have practice times or dates, just tournaments open to anyone, often with community partnerships.

The club hosted its first tournament in partnership with Red Wolves for St. Jude in March 2025, and has been going strong ever since. 22 teams signed up for the event and the tournament ended up raising almost \$500 for awareness for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital. Sarah Rodriguez, a junior nursing major from Conway, Arkansas, is the Sponsorship Director for Red Wolves for St. Jude.

"I love playing pickleball. I think it's a great way to have fun and relieve stress even if you aren't good at it. We would love for this to be an annual tournament and this will be the second one," Rodriguez said

The Pickleball club will be hosting another event in partnership with Red Wolves for St. Jude on March 19 from 5-8 p.m. Those who wish to participate in the



PHOTO COURTESY OF REDWOLVES FOR ST JUDE INSTAGRAM

tournament can visit the Red Wolves for St. Jude Instagram and sign up at the link in their bio. All proceeds to the St. Jude Research Hospital.

Trail founded the club after his fellow pack leaders in Summer 2024 introduced him to the sport.

"I had played tennis for a little bit of time. I briefly heard about pickleball, but I didn't have anybody to play tennis with, so I was like, "Okay, I'll play pickleball," Trail said. "And that really helped me connect with them."

He said that connection is what he wants for every A-State student who joins Pickleball Club.

"I didn't really ever hang out with them (other pack leaders) outside of doing the pack leader stuff, so it's a great way to get to know people, and that's what I wanted for the club."

Kenny Nguyen, a junior accounting major from Jonesboro, said joining the

pickleball club has been one of his favorite parts of his A-State experience.

"It's a super welcoming group and an easy way to meet people outside of class while staying active," Nguyen said. "I've made connections through the club that I probably wouldn't have otherwise, and it's been something I genuinely look forward to, including tournaments, and philanthropy events."

The club currently has big plans for the future, including a potential tournament partnered with United Way, a non-profit organization in Jonesboro.

Trail says Pickleball Club is easy to get connected with and ready to welcome anyone, regardless of experience or skill. Pickleball, depending on who you play with, can be played competitively or casually between friends. Just because it's considered a low-impact sport doesn't mean it's not a good source of exercise.

For more information or to join, email the club's faculty advisor, Micayla McGowen, at mmcgowen@AState.edu or Trail at maddox.trail@smail.astate.edu.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ASTATEPICKLEBALL INSTAGRAM

(Left) Thomas Naylor, junior wildlife fisheries and conservation major from Maumelle, Arkansas, Maddox Trail, a junior laboratory science major from Rector, Arkansas and Tanner Kenley junior English major, from Maumelle, Arkansas cap off the end of the first pickleball tournament in partnership with Red Wolves for St. Jude. Naylor and Kenleys team, team TNT, won the doubles tournament.

## Dungeons & Dragons isn't as cringy as you think



Photo by Amelia Young | Life Editor

Instead of playing on regular game mats, we use a projector pointed at table with a white sheet on top. Using this method, we are able to play YouTube videos and thus can play on almost any terrain you can think of. During this session, our Bard cast a fireball, shown by the orange ring, to try and kill sentient trees.

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I don't know what other people spend their Monday nights doing, but my friends and I play pretend for almost four hours every week.

The first time I remember hearing about Dungeons & Dragons was in 2016, from a new show on Netflix called "Stranger Things." From that introduction, it seemed like a

scary game I would never want to play. As I got older, I learned that, while "Stranger Things" pulls heavily from D&D, quite a bit is fabricated for the story.

This past summer, when my friend asked if I wanted to join her boyfriend's D&D campaign, I was hesitant, but said yes anyway. Including the Dungeon Master, or DM, there are six of us who are a part of the "Legends of Esthen" campaign. While we

all knew each other before playing, now we've all become friends and have a lot of jokes stemming from the campaign.

This campaign is a "homebrew" campaign, meaning the DM created the story and the world we are playing. We still play by the majority of regular D&D rules, but there might be a few differences as this campaign has never existed before. I haven't ever played any other type of campaign before, but I do have to say, this homebrewed story is going to be hard to beat if I do ever play in another campaign.

Not only do you and the other people in the campaign play the characters you have created, but the DM also plays NPCs you can interact with almost however you want. If your DM is like mine, they will have a different voice to go along with each character, and you never know what a character is going to sound like.

So, after being a part of and playing in this campaign since August, I can confidently say that playing D&D isn't as cringy as it is made out to be.

At first, it is a lot to learn, and honestly, I still don't know everything, but I have a solid enough grasp to play pretty efficiently. DandDbeyond.com is a very useful website that

helps you through each step of creating a character, from their race, to traits, to what actions they can take. D&D Beyond can even generate character sheets, giving you a quick and accessible look at everything you need to know about your character.

As someone who grew up reading and watching all things fantasy, I was very excited to learn we would be playing in a fantasy world of curses, dragons, magic wielders and evil men controlling the king.

What I really loved was making my character and writing her background.

Having consumed so much fantasy media, I had many different ideas for what and who I wanted my character to be. In the end, I chose to make my character vastly different from myself and yet still include some familiar characteristics. Any character you can dream up or think of, you can make in D&D.

Having a set time to play once a week makes it part of my schedule and it's one of the only times in my week I'm not at all focused on school. I'm focused on a bunch of make-believe characters in a make-believe world fighting

make-believe monsters, and I could not be having more fun, most of the time.

After playing for eight months, I am very invested in the world my DM created, and it does make me sad to think about how we only have five or six sessions left, but I am so ready to figure out what these past months have been leading to.

So yes, while D&D might be a little nerdy, if you play with the right people, have a DM who allows you to make use of your imagination and creativity and embrace the experience, I wouldn't say that playing D&D is cringy at all.



Photo by Amelia Young | Life Editor

(Left) Sam Krallman, computer science graduate student from Benton, Arkansas, Thomas McDonough, accounting alumnus from Cabot, Arkansas and Luke Caldwell, history graduate student, from Conway, Arkansas, all roleplay their D&D characters to buy candy from a store.



### Staying Safe During St. Patrick's Day Festivities

- ☘
 Remember to plan for a sober drive home  
 Drinking and driving is deadly and should never be an option
- ☘
 Be mindful of those who could be driving while impaired
- ☘
 Don't leave your drink unattended  
 Better safe than sorry, make sure to watch your drink to avoid tampering