



RALPH ELLIS / Staff

George DeBenedetto tosses a bocce ball as Victor Egidi pauses from sweeping at the new court.

Roswell opens bocce court (it's like bowling outdoors)

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Let the games — and the kibbitzing — begin.

A regulation bocce ball court has been constructed and is now open for friendly competition in the backyard at the Roswell Adult Recreation Center.

The game, similar to lawn bowling, creates a relaxed environment that nurtures banter and socializing along competitors and spectators alike. That's one reason the regular Tuesday night games now attract more than 20 people, said Brandon Fujihira, a rec center employee who has become keeper of the court.

About eight people gathered last Thursday to play in the afternoon. Sharyn Holmes said she played bocce a few times while living in Sicily and visiting adult children in the California Napa valley, but the new court turned her into an enthusiast.

"I have an affinity for it," she said. "I like bowling and I like this."

Bocce courts can be found at several Atlanta

restaurants and a number of private residences, but Roswell is thought to have the first public court in the Atlanta area.

The local Italian society, La Societa Italiana, and the Roswell city government teamed up to build the court, with the Italian society purchasing all the materials and providing volunteer labor, said George DeBenedetto of the Italian society. He estimated the court cost about \$1,100.

Wooden rails enclose the 12-by-60 foot court. Three inches of gravel form a foundation topped by three inches of crushed stone.

The seniors who frequent the adult rec center use the court most of the time, but Fujihira said residents of any age can play, though they should call ahead. One high school asked for court time for Italian exchange students.

DeBenedetto, who has built two other courts, thinks more people will love bocce once they give it a try.

"This could be the beginning of something real good," he said.