

The square root of fun

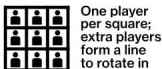
Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 23 February 2024 00:00



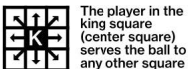
How to Play 9 Square



You can play with...



You start playing when...



You win by...



You fail to defend your square when...



When you fail to defend your square...



Rehoboth Christian students raise Almost \$12,000 for pet project

The square root of fun

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 23 February 2024 00:00

Not all of life's lessons can be learned in a classroom, but there is often overlap. A perfect example is a student project at Rehoboth Christian High School to build a community common area for the campus.

The idea started with geometry teacher Emily Wuestwald. She made a point of taking her classes outside "to look at what's been given to us and [how to] bring beauty to it, but also find beauty in what's there."

"This is something I have been dreaming up for the past five years, finding a space for the high school students, just giving them a place to enjoy and a place to be during lunch break, before school and after school as well," she said.

Jonathan Zylstra, a sophomore who's working on the project, put it another way.

"A lot of us were kind of bored and didn't have anything to do other than be on our phones during lunch or during breaks," he said. "We were trying to find a way to get outside and be more active rather than just sitting around. We designed this kind of project for things we would enjoy doing at lunch if we had the opportunity."

At the top of their list is a 9-square, a game that's sort of a mashup of foursquare and volleyball. Players in squares in a cage-like frame bounce a ball through the air and try to keep it from touching the ground without leaving their squares.

About the recreational opportunities available for students on campus currently are ping pong and a donated golf simulator.

"Only a couple of kids can use it. You have to prove you can hit the ball straight," junior Morgan Arsenault said.

The square root of fun

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 23 February 2024 00:00

Looking for a more inclusive option that didn't require special skills, the students turned to something they'd had before: a portable 9-square setup the school has that became popular with students and helped them find new friends.

"All of our students really love the 9-square. We'll get mostly all the high schoolers out," Zylstra said. Irelynn Delgado, 14, agreed.

Freshman Irelynn Delgado said the portable 9-square has helped build a lot of friendships.

It helped with communication between peers who wouldn't usually talk to each other and interact," Delgado said. "It brings a lot of unlikely friendships. When we play we have a lot of teamwork happen and a lot of just fun to bring up student morale."

The teachers get a kick out of it, too, Wuestwald said, because it lets them interact with students in a fun, low-pressure way.

The permanent setup will take up 25 sq. ft. of a planned 50-ft.-by-100-ft. space that will eventually also have shade structures, trees and more. At some point that might include a giant outdoor chess board.

"We're hoping to make [the space] grow over the years," Wuestwald said.

But let's not forget that Wuestwald teaches geometry, not recess, so bringing the project into the classroom was also important.

Her geometry class started the project by looking at blueprints of the high school. Then she challenged students to use their math skills to find the dimensions of their classroom and use different ratios and similar figures to find how to cover the ground with various materials. They discussed logical thinking and budgeting. They had a landscape engineer come in to talk about planning, what types of plants would work best and issues like drainage, erosion, sustainability

The square root of fun

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
Friday, 23 February 2024 00:00

and maintenance.

When it's ready, the space will be there for middle and high school students, whose classrooms are on either side of the chosen space, and for the resident campus community.

"We have a big community of people who live on campus as well, so their children and adults will be able to use the space," Delgado said.

The church community can also use the space after services or for social events and for Wednesday after-school meetings of Gems and Cadets, scout-like youth ministry programs.

Like almost any project, part of getting it up and running is money. The group has raised almost \$12,000 but that's been donations from Wuestwald's parents' congregation, Shalom Christian Reform Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who chipped in after she brought it up on a visit home. Some of the donors are planning a trip to Gallup in April to help start building what their donations were made for.

"They will come and help us build this space, and create a community and connection with Shalom in different ways," Wuestwald said, "Whether it's this project, student tuition aid, or just having them come out and be part of our community for a week."

The budget goal is \$30,000 and the school is gratefully accepting donations at <https://factsmgt.admin.com/give/appeal/sX5k6FAav>.

By Holly J. Wagner
Sun Correspondent