

New Book Reveals the Human Story Behind America's Pickleball Boom

Eighteen true stories reveal how one small step toward something new can lead to friendship, resilience, purpose and belonging.

SANTA ROSA BEACH, FL, UNITED STATES, August 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- They came to

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Colleen Riddle

learn pickleball. They did not expect to find friendships that would carry them through grief, divorce, retirement, relocation, empty nests, loneliness and some of life's most difficult transitions.

In her new book, "[Came for the Game, Stayed for the People](#): True Stories of Pickleball, Friendship & Belonging," author and coach Colleen Riddle shares 18 true stories of people who stepped onto a pickleball court looking for exercise, fun or something new and discovered connection, confidence and a community they never knew they needed.

But Riddle is quick to point out that this isn't really a book about pickleball.

"It's about what can happen when we're willing to show up," Riddle says. "Sometimes we think we're saying yes to a game, a class or something completely ordinary. We have no idea that one small yes might introduce us to the people who will become part of our lives."

The book grew organically from Riddle's experience building and coaching a pickleball community. Over time, she began noticing something happening beyond learning serves, dinks and strategy. Strangers were becoming friends. People were supporting one another through difficult transitions, rebuilding confidence and finding a renewed sense of connection.

The stories existed long before the idea for the book did.

The 18 individuals featured are real people whose relationships and support systems developed naturally within the community. Some arrived carrying grief. Others were adjusting to retirement, divorce, relocation, changing family roles or the loneliness that can accompany a new

season of life. None arrived expecting pickleball to change anything beyond how they spent an afternoon.

Yet Riddle saw again and again how an ordinary decision to try something new could open the door to something much larger.

Although pickleball provides the setting, the book is intended for a much broader audience. Riddle hopes to reach people navigating transition, searching for connection, or wondering what the next chapter of life might hold. The stories offer a reminder that friendship, joy, purpose, and belonging are possible at every stage of life.

Each story is followed by Riddle's personal reflection and three "Life Lessons," inviting readers to consider how the experience might apply to their own lives.

Those lessons also inspired "[Quietly Brave: A Reflection Journal](#)," a companion book designed to help readers turn inspiration into personal reflection. Featuring all 54 Life Lessons, guided prompts and space to write, the journal can be used alongside "Came for the Game, Stayed for the People" or on its own.

"You don't always know which yes will matter," Riddle says. "Sometimes courage is loud. But sometimes it's simply walking through a door, showing up when it would be easier to stay home, or allowing yourself to be new at something. That small step can change more than you realize."

Riddle is an author, certified pickleball instructor, ACE Certified Personal Trainer and founder of Fit Pickleballer. A former Florida State University scholarship swimmer, she has spent more than 20 years helping people build confidence through movement, wellness and community.

"Came for the Game, Stayed for the People" and "Quietly Brave: A Reflection Journal" were released August 18, 2026, and are available on Amazon and at [ColleenRiddle.com](https://colleenriddle.com).

For review copies, interviews, high-resolution images or additional information, contact Colleen Riddle at colleen@colleenriddle.com.

Colleen Riddle



Author and pickleball coach Colleen Riddle with the cover of her new book, *Came for the Game, Stayed for the People: True Stories of Pickleball, Friendship & Belonging*.

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