

Around Town

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By Billy Ray McKelvy

De Queen Mayor

The fall soccer season is underway at Herman Dierks Park.

The city organized the first soccer league last spring to test the interest in the sport. The fall league has about 110 players, up from 75 players who signed up in the spring. For a small registration fee, each player is equipped with safety equipment and a jersey.

Based on the interest and the requests for a soccer facility, the City of De Queen has applied for a grant to build a soccer field in the park. A master plan developed for the park calls for the lower softball field to be converted to a soccer field. Undeveloped property west of the park will eventually be converted into two additional softball and baseball fields.

Although soccer is still new in this area, the sport is tremendously popular around the world. Soccer was the subject of a cover story in the *National Geographic* magazine last year. The author of the article attributes the sport's popularity to the fact that it can be played with minimal equipment. In addition, soccer fans are very loyal to their team.

Arkansas high schools are adding soccer as a spring sport and it is expected to grow in Arkansas.

De Queen's soccer league has so many players that games will be played on Monday evening, as well as Saturday morning. These games are a good opportunity to learn more about the sport.