

A GAME FOR ALL AGES

The debut of a new column about youth bridge.

By Dave Smith

What do you get when you mix a neat group of youngsters, a motivated bridge teacher and the world's greatest game? You get a lot of fun, as Kathy Zeibert of Rocklin CA found out.

Zeibert began playing bridge in college on the Stanford Bridge Team with her future husband Danny. Once they had children, they started teaching them to play. Kathy looked into the ACBL Bridge in Schools program as a way to teach more youngsters.

Here's her story:

We have two sets of twins. My husband and I began teaching the older set when they were in kindergarten, and they took to it right away. I looked into the Bridge in Schools program as a way to teach more kids their age.

Last year, I met with the Rocklin Academy principal and explained how the program worked. Because many schools have suffered budget

cuts recently, they were pleased that all materials were provided by the ACBL.

From playing with my sons, I knew that young children cannot hold 13 cards easily, so I purchased a set of card holders. I also contacted Unit 505 (Sacramento) and they donated bidding boxes and boards. I wanted the students to play with them so they could easily transition to a regular bridge club.

After we had been meeting for about six months and my students knew the basics, I contacted Lincoln Hills (CA) DBC to see if we could come to their club to give my students the experience of playing with real bridge players in a real club environment. Gayle Koedel matched one adult with each of my students. It was amazing how mature the



First-graders Jacob Zeibert and Anjali Suthahar enjoy bridge at their school.

youngsters acted once partnered with an adult. The adults enjoyed seeing the kids play, and the kids were so proud to play in a real club.

The kids have a good base knowledge and are able to play with each other and enjoy it. They have a lot to learn, but my main goal was to get them excited about bridge and to have fun. Now that they are hooked, they have the rest of their lives to learn conventions and improve their play.

I started with 15 students and had 10 who stayed with it the whole year. We meet at school once a week on Fridays for one hour.

The Bridge in Schools program provides a teaching manual, one deck of cards per table, tee shirts and a trophy. Textbooks are available for older students. It's recommended that classes be 12 or more students to start. Lessons are normally one hour long. While the lessons and play are often held at a school, classes can meet at other places, such as a YMCA, or Boys and Girls Clubs.

For more information, visit our web site at www.acbl.org. In the upper left-hand corner, find and click on "School Bridge Program."

You can also contact Dana Norton in the ACBL Education Department by e-mail at dana.norton@acbl.org or by phone at 662-253-3161. □



Kathy Zeibert (top left) meets with students once a week to learn and play bridge.