

# A GAME FOR ALL AGES

**There's nothing to worry about.** *By Dave Smith*

A little more than one year ago, *The Kansas City Star* newspaper published an article "Bridge Games Offer Strategy For Learning." It was about fourth-grade students who were learning bridge in a gifted class in a Kansas City MO magnet school. One of the children had grandparents who played bridge 40 miles west in Lawrence KS. Through the grandparents, the group was invited to go on a field trip to Lawrence to play in a mentor game, by club manager Chris Lane.

Meanwhile, club members in Lawrence were teaching ACBL's Youth for Bridge program to eighth-graders in a local school. They found out about the special game and asked if their kids could play, too.

"Sure, bring 'em on," said Lane, and "Kids' Day" was born. The game was a success and there are plans to make this an annual event.

**Here's Lane's report:**

We began with a brief social period that included food and mingling, then I asked the mentors and children to pair up. I explained that this was an official game — everything would be done on a computer

*Clayton Pfeifer, Becky Mullins, Yvonne Hedges and Carter Francisco get ready to play.*



— and that the winners would get masterpoints.

The mentors were told that the kids had very basic skills. In other words, the mentors should not try anything as fancy as a Jacoby transfer, but rather they should be ready to field whatever came their way. I also asked that they specifically not try to teach — just answer questions. Above all, they should make sure the kids had a good time.

The 16 pairs began play. All of the teachers and parents who came marveled at how quiet the youngsters were. Occasionally a kid would jump up from the table and grab something from the snack area and run back to the table to bid. I had fewer director calls than I do during an ordinary club game, but, of course, this was no ordinary game!

During a mid-morning hospitality break,

a mentor came up to me smiling broadly and whispered, "My partner opened 2♠ with a two-card suit!"

Another told me of a 12-point 1NT opener. One of the kibitzing adults commented on an outstanding defensive play by another child. Needless to say, some of the results were, shall we say, diverse, but the competition was fierce!

After the fourth round, I explained the skip. I added that this was the time for anyone who was not having a good time to feel free to drop out. Not only were there no takers, there were protests. Everyone was having a ball! A few more pieces of coffee cake disappeared, and we started round five.

The pizza arrived about 11:45 a.m. It got a bit noisy as the players finished up and the kids dug into a beautiful tossed salad, carrot sticks, fruit juice and great pizzas. I scored the game, printed out summaries for all the pairs and handed the results to the kids while they ate. They compared scores and reveled in the matchpoints they had won.

The winners, evenly divided between the two schools, were announced and everyone cheered and applauded for each one.

At the very end, I asked if everyone had a good time and was greeted with loud cheers and applause. One little girl looked at me with shiny eyes, broke ranks with her classmates and ran across the room to hug me. It doesn't get any better than this.

The 16 kids who competed in this special event were just wonderful. If this is the future of bridge, we have absolutely nothing to worry about. □



*The first annual Kids' Day was held in Lawrence KS. First row: Lucy Mulholland, Mary Beth Eddy, Aerialle Jackson, Dominika Washington; second row: Tehya Robinson, Taylor Corn, Tyeree Brown, Alyssa Hammock; third row: Carter Francisco, Narito Mendez, Clayton Pfeifer, Ashley Hutton, Lindsey Griffin (obscured); back row: Royce Harrison (obscured), Kyle Wittman, Randall Wingert.*