

Sisters bridge group to offer beginner lessons

By Craig F. Eisenbeis
Correspondent

The Sisters Bridge Club, which has a history going back more than 30 years, is thriving. Later this month, the group will be offering free bridge lessons.

Just three years ago, however, the organization was in danger of fizzling out.

“We had lost some of our older players,” said Susan Sandberg, current co-organizer for the group, “and new people weren’t taking their places.”

In late 2012, the group sometimes had a hard time mustering just two tables (eight players); and, occasionally, play had to be cancelled when there were not enough players even for that. One long-time member, Ardie Winters, suggested that an article in *The Nugget* might help revive local interest in the venerable card game. As it turned out, she was quite right.

Fast-forward to the present; and, now, six to eight tables (24-32 players) are routinely showing up for the weekly bridge sessions every Thursday afternoon at The Pines Clubhouse.

“I offered lessons a few years ago without any publicity, and we had four people sign up,” Sandberg said. “I thought that was pretty good. But, after *The Nugget* story

about us, we had 16 new people sign up. I had no idea that the response would be so overwhelming. Recently, I’ve had more people contact me about lessons, so we’re going to do it again!”

Sandberg emphasized the social nature of Sisters bridge.

“We’re just here to enjoy the game with others that share our interest,” she said. “I think that the game is great because of the mental intensity involved in it. It keeps people’s minds sharp and working.”

“These lessons we’re offering are going to be very, very beginning bridge — counting points, bidding, eventually working up to basic systems and conventions that are popular at this time.”

The learning sessions will be held each Thursday morning, starting February 25 at 9:30 a.m. The lessons are free, but there is a nominal facilities charge of \$1 per session for players who are not residents of The Pines.

The lessons will continue for a few weeks, the number of which will be determined by the progress and interest of the students.

“Bridge is constant learning,” Sandberg said. “You can never be perfect at it. No matter what level you’ve attained, you’re always learning. It always provides new challenges depending on how the

cards fall. An added benefit of bridge is the social interaction. You will meet new people and make new friends. You can’t say that about the games you play on your computer, TV, or cell phone.”

Long celebrated as a pathway to building and maintaining brain power, the game of bridge is descended from a 16th century card game called whist, which was popular among the English nobility of that era. Over the years, the game evolved to its present form of “contract” bridge. The current method of scoring was developed by the wealthy American Harold Vanderbilt in 1925.

New participants are always welcome at the afternoon bridge sessions; however, players are asked to sign up ahead of time to make sure that everyone has a partner and that enough tables are set up in advance. Each participant is also asked to



PHOTO PROVIDED

Donna Holland claims a trick at bridge play in Sisters.

contribute a (very) nominal fee to help defray facility costs and provide token cash prizes for the highest bridge scores.

The Sisters bridge group plays in The Pines Clubhouse every Thursday afternoon at

12:30 p.m., except holidays. Sessions usually last about three hours and feature a round-robin play of six hands at each table.

For more information contact Donna Hurd at 541-548-8035.

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