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YOUR MOVE

Astoria Chess Club invites new, experienced players

By **PATTY HARDIN**
For The Daily Astorian

You want to learn to play chess, but you think: I’m too old. There’s no place to learn. Chess is too complicated. I can’t find an instructor. I could never compete with tournament players.

Time to checkmate those doubts. Beginners need a friendly, laid-back atmosphere to learn chess or boost their skill in the game. Fortunately, there are two places in Astoria that fit the bill: The Astoria Chess Club meets at 11:30 a.m. Saturdays at 3 Cups Coffee House, and 5:30 p.m. Mondays in the Astoria Library’s Flag Room.

The club has been meeting at 3 Cups for about five years, year-round.

“We’re a friendly, non-competitive group,” club founder Amy Lewis said.

Lewis learned the game as a kid, playing with family and having “grudge matches” with siblings.

Two questions every player should ask during game play: Why was a particular piece moved? Which piece can be attacked?

“The queen is the most powerful of the chess pieces. She is the only piece that can move forward, backward and diagonally,” Lewis said. “It’s no wonder new players are eager to put the queen to work early.”

The World Chess Championship is on

a two-year cycle, with a championship held every even-numbered year. This year the championship will be played in London from Nov. 8 through 28.

The American championships are held annually in St. Louis, Missouri. In 2019, the games will take place April 12 and 13.

There is an annual scholastic championship in Seaside. Chess Club member Oscar Nelson, of Astoria, hopes to make chess more popular among Astoria High School students so they can be represented in the Seaside tournament.

Lewis plans to have a chess tournament in the spring. It will be open — meaning, anybody can play. Players will be sectioned according to age and skill.

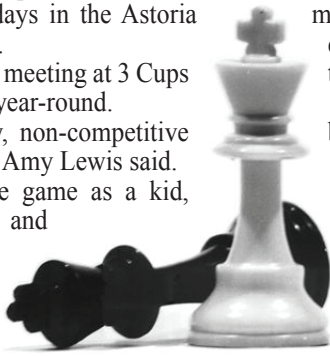
The library has several chessboards that people have donated over the years.

Lexi Lee, another Astoria resident and chess club member, has been playing chess for two years. “I started by playing checkers with my uncle. When he got tired of playing checkers, I challenged myself to learn chess,” she said.

Chess teaches strategy and pattern recognition, which plays a major role in music, physics and engineering.

In addition, when kids play chess, they learn it’s OK to lose a game, Lewis said.

Lee agreed. “I think more schools should teach chess for the reason that it teaches players how to lose gracefully.”



Members of the Astoria Chess Club concentrate on the game at 3 Cups Coffee House. From left: Oscar Nelson, Amy Lewis, Patty Hardin and Randy Sensing. Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

