

A GAME FOR ALL AGES

Middle school bridge in the “Biggest Little City in the World”

Bridge — a gamble? Not so! say teachers, volunteers, students and bridge advocates affiliated with Reno Youth Bridge Inc. (RYB). Established in 2008, RYB spearheads after-school activity classes in which middle school students in Washoe County NV are given the opportunity to learn and play bridge. After two successful years during which the program expanded from six schools to 14 schools, it is still growing.

RYB organized an intense series in conjunction with the county’s “Tee Up” summer school session: Bridge was one of the enrichment activities offered. The plan called for lessons five days a week over the three-week period, taught by a volunteer instructor working under the organization’s supervision and compensated (in the form of an honorarium) under an independent service contract with RYB.

“The one deficiency we’ve identified over the past two school years was a lack of continuity in learning when there is only one class a week,” RYB Managing Director Bud Brewer says.

That deficiency has been remedied. After-school bridge classes will meet twice a week in the coming school year. “We plan to build incentives and scholarship rewards into the two-days-a-week system based on attendance and performance.”

The focus during the 2011 and 2012 school year, says Brewer, will be “to build enthusiasm by concentrating on the creation of bridge teams that will have the opportunity to participate in interscholastic team competition.”

The lesson plan was developed by Kathy Lane, retired teacher and president of RYB. “There is a tremendous upsurge of interest in bridge nationally and internationally, and we think this interest should be reflected in youth bridge, as well. Bridge is available to any child from any socioeconomic background and provides benefits on many levels: academic enrichment, socialization, teamwork, inferential thinking, competition, financial opportunities and social networking.”

One special feature of the RYB les-

son plan is the incorporation of online play. After eight weeks of bidding and play instruction, Brewer visits each of the classes to introduce students to Bridge Base Online. He goes online each Saturday thereafter and offers the opportunity for students to join his teaching table for two hours. Last March, RYB held their first online knockout team game.

Students in RYB’s pilot program had the unique opportunity to play at an NABC when the spring tournament was held in Reno in 2010. Following their game, they were given a tour of the other playing areas. It was at that tournament that they got to meet Bill Gates. RYB also held a pairs game at the regional hosted by District 21 between Christmas and New Year’s in which 26 students representing more than half the schools in the program participated.

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, RYB relies on the generous support of individuals, corporations and foundations, including the ACBL’s Educational Foundation. □



Sixteen teams registered for RYB’s Countywide Middle School Bridge Tournament in April.



Depoali Middle School emerged as the winner in the knockouts to win the RYB–WCSD Team Championship Silver Cup.