

# Game bridges generation gap

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[Joy Slagowski](#)

DAILY NEWS-SUN (<http://www.yourwestvalley.com/>)

Some Dysart Unified School District students in El Mirage are forgoing their Playstations, Nintendo Wii systems and computer games and going back to basics with a game of cards. Each Tuesday, a couple of dozen students play bridge with area seniors as part of the Bridge-Squad clubs.

The Bridge-Squad meets at Dysart Elementary on Tuesday afternoons, and on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at El Mirage Elementary School.

Local bridge players from Sun City West, along with a board member of the American Contract Bridge League, guide the students through the intricacies of the game.

"It's hilarious," said volunteer Jane Woolley of Sun City West, and member of the Kiva bridge club there. "Some are really willing and want to learn. And this isn't a kids' game, where they get to get up and run around and talk."

Lillian Jones, another member of the Kiva bridge club, said she has been impressed with how quickly the students have picked up the game.

"It's wonderful, and I just enjoy being with the children and seeing how intelligent they are," Jones said.

Ashely Cruz, a third-grader, said she enjoys the game.

"It's fun to play and learn how to deal, and sort and count," Cruz said.

Rod Bias of Phoenix, a board member of The American Contract Bridge League, which has about 160,000 members nationally - 1,700 in Phoenix and the West Valley - coordinated introducing the club to the district after failing to garner interest in other districts

"We looked in the right place this time to find it," Bias said.

Bias helped the club participate in its first bridge tournament over Valentine's Day, with its second tournament planned for May in Scottsdale.

Julie Mackenzie, who coordinates Dysart Elementary's before and after school programs, which also include tutoring and other activities, said the mathematical, social and other skills learned benefit the students. It also can be a way to help students connect with family members to teach them the game.

"Card and board games are a dying breed," Mackenzie said. "Families tend to not get together to play them, though mine does. We play canasta.."

Mackenzie's two sons, Nickolas, fifth grade, and Joshua, fourth grade, are members of the Bridge-Squad.

"When my two sons play at home, it's not an easy game, and the terms and words that come out, it sounds like a different language," Mackenzie said.

Mackenzie said she hopes to work toward parental involvement in the club.

"We want them to come with their child and then take the game home and play as a family," Mackenzie said.

Sixth grader Josh Alger said he is accustomed to playing card and board games at home because he comes from a family with nine children who do that for entertainment.

Learning how to play bridge has been easy for him.

"But when I tried to get bridge games going at home, they got confused," Josh said. "I guess I can't teach as well as I can learn."

To volunteer for the Bridge-Squad, contact Mackenzie at [julie.mackenzie@dysart.org](mailto:julie.mackenzie@dysart.org), call Bias at 623-444-7960



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**Jane Woolley of the Kiva bridge club in Sun City West, works with 6th graders Josh Alger, left, and Alexander Garduno on Tuesday, March 31, at Dysart Elementary school.**

Photos by JOY SLAGOWSKI



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**Rod Bias of Phoenix, a board member of The American Contract Bridge League coordinates the Bridge-Squad at Dysart and El Mirage elementary schools. He's with Nicholas Mackenzie and Matthew Paez, 5th grade, and Joshua Mackenzie, 4th grade, at Dysart.**



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Ashley Cruz, 3rd grade, plays bridge on Tuesday, March 31, 2009, at Dysart Elementary School with Lillian Jones, of the Kiva bridge club in Sun City West.