

Local bridge club says there's always room for 1 more player



Georgia Banziger has been playing at the bridge center for decades.



Members of the Miami Valley Bridge Association concentrate on their cards but take breaks to chat and enjoy snacks between hands. CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Regular Miami Valley Bridge Association players come from across the community.

BY BARBARA MACKEY BYRD CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Did you learn to play bridge years ago? Perhaps you quit playing when home and work life got busy. Well, you can pick up the popular card game again in retirement, no matter your skill level.

The Miami Valley Bridge Association hosts games most days, and you don't have to be a member to play at the group's Miami Valley Bridge Center, says Georgia Banziger, bridge center manager and MVBA board member. The center is at 4559 Marshall Road in Kettering, in a former Kettering elementary school just south of the YMCA.

Playing a few games at the center is a great way to see if MVBA membership is for you, suggests Banziger.

Each game is \$8. No partner? No problem. Standby players are usually available to partner with you.

You may find a regular partner there. You'll certainly make some new friends. Banziger notes that many MVBA members have been playing with the organization for decades. And there's always room for one more.

"It's like family to me," says Banziger. "I've played with these people for years and years."

Annual dues of \$49 help cover game snacks, holiday parties and award ceremonies.

Members get birthday cakes, and cards circulate for birthdays and ailing members.

Banziger points out that MVBA players come from across Dayton, Trotwood, Kettering, Centerville, Tipp City, Troy, Xenia and even some regulars from Yellow Springs.

Because most local MVBA games are scheduled during the day, except for Monday evening games, most players are retired. When winter comes, members who head south or west or even outside the United States can play in thousands of other clubs sanctioned by the ACBL, explains Banziger.

"Snowbird" members can stay in touch with their regular partners and play with them online. MVBA also schedules regular online games for those who are less mobile and/or who prefer to avoid driving in inclement weather.

"I'm one of the younger players," laughs Banziger, 77, adding there are many regular players who are in their 80s as well as some in their 90s. "They're sharp," she says.

That means there is lots of laughter and good-natured jabs between games, but once the cards are dealt, players settle in and concentrate.

The MVBA is a unit of the American Contract Bridge League. After each MVBA game at the bridge center, local game directors forward results to the ACBL for masterpoints.

Players achieve ranks from rookie to grand life master. Members can review

masterpoint totals via email or printouts at the bridge center.

“Points are a way to challenge yourself, like earning a black belt in karate or a grand master in chess,” explains Banziger.

The MVBA also offers opportunities to give back to the community. Each year the MVBA sponsors a tournament to benefit a local charity.

This year the tournament netted \$2,580 for the local chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association, says Banziger.

And even if you never found the time to learn bridge before, the MVBA may still be for you.

Newer players will find multiple options. Banziger notes that the Monday evening game is designed especially for newer players and includes a short learning session before the game starts. Other games are “invitational,” meaning game directors limit the players to those who want a “very friendly” atmosphere. There is also a mentor program, with game discounts given to both mentor and mentee.

Fall bridge lessons will also begin soon.

Ready to begin playing? It’s easy to start.

Check out the MVBA website at mvba.org. You’ll find the game schedule. Beginner games are clearly noted, and game directors and contact information are included if you have questions. Also find details on lessons and how to join the MVBA. Annual dues are \$49.

Or call the Miami Valley Bridge Center at 937-439- 1969 for more information.