



A Game for All Ages

Family style

BY SUE MUNDAY

“Inspiring the next generation of bridge players”: That’s the vision that brought together dedicated volunteers to start up Silicon Valley Youth Bridge (SiVY Bridge).

Since its founding in May 2013, the California nonprofit has created and grown a remarkable variety of youth programs: free after-school bridge classes; informal Friday-night games where kids can hang out, play some cards and get to know each other; monthly Party, Pizza Play Bridge events; a week-long summer camp, which attracted 45 students; and a collaboration with Boys and Girls Clubs of San Jose/Silicon Valley.

Two of SiVY Bridge’s founders, Debbie Rosenberg and Mukund Thapa, share a particular purpose, and that is to strengthen the family dynamic through bridge. Realization of their objective is being played out in SiVY Bridge’s parent-child duplicate games.

Both Debbie and Mukund are proud to have had the opportunity to partner their accomplished teenagers at the bridge table. Kevin Rosenberg and Isha Thapa have been integrally involved with their local bridge community. Both volunteered at SiVY Bridge’s summer camp and help with other events.

“In addition to bridge,” Debbie says, “Kevin plays chess. As the mother of a young competitor, I used to take him to tournaments. And when we got there, I sat out in the hall with all of the other chess parents. It wasn’t like bridge, where you and your children can play and compete as partners. Bridge is an interest you can share for the rest of your lives.”

Mukund is every bit as passionate about the parent-child duplicate series. “I like to think of playing bridge with your child as a big part of ‘ties that bind,’” he says. “What makes me happiest about Isha’s bridge journey is purely selfish: I got to spend time with her during her teen years when I

thought she would drift away.”

His partnership and enviable closeness with his daughter prompted a number of adult players to comment that they wished they had played more with their mother or father.

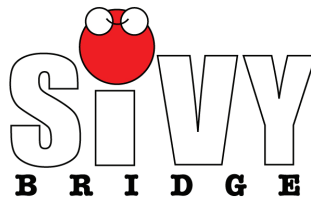
“So all this got me thinking that maybe having parents and grandparents and kids playing together would work for several reasons. One is the incredible joy of being able to spend time with your child during their formative years, when parents – and I think especially fathers – are last on the totem pole. Another is creating a bond with your child, who, over time, will cherish the time spent with you.”

While SiVY Bridge activities are generally targeted for youth 9 to 25 years old, younger ones do sneak in.

Take, for example, Brian and Marcy Tivol’s kids, 7-year-old Violet and 4-year-old Colin. Brian and Marcy, who are avid game players, eagerly anticipated playing games with their kids. “But I never imagined it would be bridge!” says Marcy.

The Tivols have played bridge socially for a number of years, but it wasn’t until recently that Marcy discovered duplicate. “Needless to say, it’s quite addicting.” While at the club, Marcy picked up a flier about SiVY Bridge’s parent-child games.

Violet has played with both Mom and Dad at the SiVY Bridge parent-child duplicates. Playing with Brian in the September game, Violet was declaring a 3♥ contract. She claimed the rest of the tricks with five cards remaining. Though the opponents’ trumps had been drawn, it wasn’t an obvious case of all winners in Violet’s hand. When asked about her line of play, the 7-year old explained, “It’s a crossruff.” Violet won her first masterpoints and



Seven-year-old Violet Tivol and SiVY Bridge founder Debbie Rosenberg are all smiles.



Twins Claire and Cornelius Duffie play with their grandparents, Carol and Fred Schwerer.



Olivia d'Arezzo seems to like Colin Tivol's lead. Director Will Watson kibitzes from the corner.

immediately wanted to join the ACBL. Her dad watched as she completed the membership paperwork, and it struck him: It was the first time Violet had ever filled out a form by herself.

A fidgety 4-year old, Colin finds it harder to sit through a whole game. According to Debbie, "Colin has a pretty good understanding of the game, including legal bids and even a little strategy." According to Colin, "Bridge is the best game in the world!"

Marcy points out that while they downplay the masterpoint focus in favor of the social aspects of the game, Violet is their competitive one. Colin likes the strategy and logic. "They're both just really into it," she says. "The finesses, the math, the conventions, the language – they are like little sponges."

Jennifer Stern and her husband, Jeffrey Pugh, are veteran duplicate players. "We would love to see our children get interested in bridge," Jennifer says, "but it's a bit of an uphill battle competing with everything else in their lives."

Catherine, 17, and Michelle, 12, took the Learn Bridge in a Day? class at the Palo Alto Bridge Center in June. "We think it was a defense mechanism so that at least they could understand the dinner conversation!" laughs Jennifer.

Michelle was excited to earn her first

masterpoints playing with Jennifer in one of the parent-child games, "but I think she has realized that it will take a lot of work to win regularly," Jennifer adds.

Sometimes, it isn't bridge-loving adult relatives who are pushing their young family members to play – sometimes the impetus comes from the kids themselves.

Yael Pritch's 11-year-old son, Guy, loves chess and those types of challenge/logic games. Guy heard about bridge from his great-grandmother, an avid player who lives in Israel.

"Guy used free online programs to teach himself to play bridge when we were vacationing in Israel," she says. A couple of days with his great-grandmother combined with the online learning and play, and Guy was hooked.

"When we were back in the U.S., Guy joined SiVY Bridge. He enjoyed the casual games very much," Yael says. And then Guy wanted to start playing in the parent-child games.

"I am not a bridge player," Yael admits. Using the same online learning software Guy studied, she crammed so that she could partner her son in the September game.

Parent-child duplicate games have attracted 34 youth players and 38 parents/grandparents. For eight of the

adults, it was their first time playing duplicate.

Volunteering his time and services to direct the games is Will Watson. "Will is fantastic," Debbie says. "He couldn't be more dedicated to introducing young people to the game."

SiVY Bridge is an all-volunteer organization funded through private donations and support from the ACBL Educational Foundation.

Go to www.siliconvalleyyouthbridge.org for more information about SiVY Bridge.



Guy Knaan caught the bridge bug from his great-grandmother.