Bridge brings young and old players together

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A random Tuesday evening this summer may find you doing the following:

a) Hanging out at the pool with your friends.

b) Reading one of KidsPost’s Summer Book Club books [3].

c) Playing bridge with people who are more than eight times your age.

Did you answer C? For a handful of avid young Virginia bridge players, C is correct.

**Bridge’s increasing popularity**

“I just like playing cards,” said Quinn Eggleston, 13, from Vienna, who has been playing bridge for about five years and who will attend James Madison High School this fall. He and partner Jackson Miller, 12, spent a recent Tuesday night playing bridge at Sunrise Senior Living in Springfield, against Muriel Stolarsky, 95, and Clare Agoglia, another senior who wouldn't give her age.

Bridge may seem like a game for older people. But according to the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL), which is the biggest bridge group in the country, the game has been growing more popular in the past five years in the United States among kids. More schools are starting bridge clubs, and more bridge youth competitions are forming. It may be because adults think that bridge may help you with standardized test scores (ick!). But it could also be because bridge is fun. After all, it is a game.

**Bids and tricks**

“The first time I played, I was very confused and worried about whether I got the bid right,” said Quinn, as he looked at his hand of cards, across from Jackson, who will be in seventh grade at Luther Jackson Middle School in the fall. Now, Quinn tries to play bridge at least once a day.

Bridge is a four-person, two-team game. The whole deck is dealt so that everyone has 13 cards to begin. Before you play, you bid, which means you say how many tricks you think you can win. A trick is made of four cards, one from each player. After one person plays a card, everyone after that must throw the same suit if they can. If you don’t have a card in the right suit, then you can throw a trump card, which means a card in another suit that will win the trick. The trump suit is decided at the beginning of the game through the (slightly complicated) bidding process. The highest card or the trump card wins the trick.

**Generations learning together**

“I still don’t know how to play,” said Stolarsky as her partner, Agoglia, teased her. “She’s really good,” she said, referring to Agoglia.

Another perk to bridge, says Darbi Padbury from ACBL, is that it gets kids comfortable playing with and communicating with adults. And, in cases like the Tuesday evening games, it gets kids interacting with adults they wouldn't otherwise know.

“I started [playing bridge] when I was 12 years old in New York,” Agoglia said. “My three girlfriends and I taught each other one summer.”

It was Jackson’s second time playing with the seniors. Both his mom and dad play bridge, but he got really into it after he attended a bridge camp in Illinois last summer where he played seven hours a day for five days. (Wow!) He will return to the same camp this summer.

“I’m really good at math,” Jackson said, which helps with mastering bridge, along with having a good memory so you can remember which cards have been played.

“But not all players are good at math,” he said. “You just have to practice a lot and get experience.”

There are a lot of reasons to play bridge, from test scores for kids to helping prevent memory loss for adults, but on a recent Tuesday at the retirement community, it seemed that everyone was there for one reason: They just liked bridge.
“Nice playing,” Stolarsky told the kids as she drove her motorized chair out of the game room. “They were good players.”