

# A GAME FOR ALL AGES

## The man who wouldn't take no for an answer

By Dave Smith

Armand Carriere of Le Gardeur QC saw an ad in a Montreal newspaper that invited people to teach bridge to youth in schools. This piqued Carriere's interest, so he made a long-distance phone call to the ACBL. Carriere found out that the ACBL would provide free teaching materials that included bridge manuals, tee-shirts and trophies.

Carriere had previously been involved with the Optimist International Club, an organization that works with young people. Carriere had just retired, so the timing was good for something new.

Youth bridge instruction and Carriere were a perfect fit — he had worked with youth for 38 years through the Optimist Club, and bridge was his passion. It wasn't easy at first, however, as he had to overcome a big obstacle: There was resistance from local school officials who pictured bridge as a gambling game.

### Here's Carriere's story:

It did not start all that well when I first offered bridge lessons to the schools. I asked the school directors if I translated the manual, would they give bridge a chance — it wouldn't cost them anything. One school director said yes, but at the other school, the answer was no. A member of the school board misinterpreted bridge as a gambling game. I also went to a high school, and they fell in love with the program. So, that's how I got started.

After four years, there was another setback: Le Bourgneuf Elementary and J.B.M High School discontinued the program. They had new directors who were not familiar with bridge. We again found resistance to teaching a card game, so I moved on to new schools. Why not adapt and make a change?



Seventy-two students participated in a tournament in Repentigny QC.

The outcome is that I am now teaching at Le Tornesol and Louis Joseph-Huot elementary schools, and the program is bigger than ever. At Le Tornesol, we have 72 students. Bridge is taught during classes on school time rather than noon hour or after school.

The regular teachers assist and help the students, but I do the teaching. The students are mainly in fifth and sixth grades. We also teach mini-bridge in the fourth grade. Mini-bridge is like bridge, but without the bidding. It allows students to get ready for conventional bridge the following year. The schools now recognize that the program is educational, with student improvement in memory, concentration and logic. Also, they've noticed that students make new friends with others who are in the program.

The youth enjoy the tournaments. I get volunteers to help out, most of whom are ACBL members who play in local clubs. At one of the tournaments in 2010, I invited George Retek, ACBL Board of Directors member from District 1, along with his wife, Mari.

At the tournament, the students play bridge from 9 a.m. until the noon bell.

After eating, there is a chat review followed by announcing the results and presentation of trophies. At the tournament, students get their tee shirts and ACBL certificates. Three or four students speak to the group and share their bridge experience for the year. It all ends with hugs and words of thanks. There's lots of love and you can see the joy on the students' faces. □

## Remember your passport

Planning to play at the Summer NABC in Toronto? ACBL members who live in the United States are reminded that travel to Canada requires a passport. The processing time for new passport applications or renewals is four to six weeks. To ensure your travel plans go smoothly, apply for your passport early.

