



## We Wanna Hold Your Hand!

By Marsha Helton  
Sedona, Arizona

Sedona, Arizona is a scenic vacation resort town in Northern Arizona. Full time residents number around 11,500. In January, 2010, the Sedona Bridge Center conducted a membership drive which has resulted in over 60 students joining ACBL in 2009. These students are still actively taking weekly lessons after a year.

Marsha Helton, club manager and president of the Sedona Bridge Center has just been named the 2010 ACBL Goodwill Member of the Year in part for leading this effort. Here is Marsha's story in her words.

Our journey began two years ago when nine members of our bridge club took a one week Mexican Riviera cruise with famous bridge teacher Audrey Grant. We had a great time and became fond of the Audrey Grant method of teaching bridge.

Our club membership had been declining at an alarming rate, and we knew that we needed to do something different to attract and retain new members for our club. Although we offered intermediate bridge classes (through Peter Wahl), we had not had a significant boost in new members for at least six years. It was then that we decided to have a Bridge Festival and came up with a theme: "We Wanna Hold Your Hand" (from the Beatles).

We formed a committee of volunteers from our club to participate on the new membership drive. We met and developed a strategy for our recruitment drive.

The basis of our membership drive was an article on the ACBL website, "Attracting New Players and Potential Students" written by the Detroit bridge workshops. This article detailed a Bridge Festival held in Detroit that attracted 230 non-duplicate members for a full day session. We developed flyers with the "We Wanna Hold Your Hand" logo which we gave to local club members who then distributed to friends, churches, grocery stores and just about any media we could think of. We



Hold Your Hand volunteers Mimi Esser, Marsha Helton, Darryl Helton, Marcia Stearns & Patricia Dodd

also ran ads in our local newspapers and were grateful to receive funding from the ACBL Cooperative Advertising Program. We asked people to register for the Bridge Festival (which was free of charge including a pot luck luncheon provided by club members). We called every attendee prior to the festival explaining our program and answering their questions.

"Upon reviewing the Detroit bridge workshop, we felt that we would have a greater chance of retaining the attendees of the festival if we offered bridge lessons immediately following the festival. We set up a plan to start weekly lessons on Tuesday afternoon and/or Saturday morning. With the poor economic conditions, we also decided to offer two months of lessons free of charge. After two months, our lessons would cost only \$6.00 (our normal club fee) as our committee decided to work free of charge. Peter Wahl, our prior teacher, had made a decision to move to Ohio, and we needed a teacher. I volunteered for the assignment in addition to a very faithful staff of assistants, Mimi Esser, Patricia Dodd, Marcia Stearns, and of course, my husband Darryl Helton.

"Not having any teaching credentials or material, I was surfing the web and looked at the Audrey Grant website and saw that

Audrey and the Better Bridge staff was conducting a Teacher Accreditation Program in Palm Springs (December, 2008). I attended and was impressed with the organization and materials that had been prepared for the bridge teacher through the Audrey Grant system. I had been concerned that the Audrey Grant methods did not advance a student to the 2-Over-1 level of education and was happy to learn that Audrey had a 2-Over-1 book being published with Eric Rodwell.

"The Audrey Grant/Better Bridge system is perfect for a new teacher and for new students. The material is easy to understand and text book questions and resource materials are well planned. Several times, I decided to deviate from the text books, and/or manuals and most often, I found that if I had followed the script, I would have been better off. I want to express my thanks to Robb Gordon, who was always available to answer my questions and served as a technical resource to me.

"We launched our program last February 7 with our Bridge Festival. We started with over 120 participants. Some had previously played social bridge, quite a few had played in college ("too many years ago to count") and at least half were raw beginners. We lost a few and gained a few new

ones along the way. In fact, we continue to get referrals or visitors to Sedona who visit our classes and decide to join our program.

"I originally thought we could teach the game of bridge in six months. Well, it has been a year and we are still having four sessions a weeks (two lessons, one practice playing session and one extra lesson for beginners). We never understood how difficult this game is to teach and learn. We continue to concentrate on the basics. We have found that the students enjoy the classes as much as playing.

"As a tribute to our students, they have all worked very hard. Most of them have been coming to our sessions once or twice a week for over a year. We must also mention our regular club members who have been so very supportive of this program, volunteering their time to help with the classes and playing with our newcomers. Whenever we needed help, all we had to do was ask and a Sedona bridge club member or director was there to help teach or mentor our new players.


"When we started our program, one of the benefits that we stated was that our new members would be introduced to a lot of new people. Our newcomers have found this to be true. Many have stated that they never anticipated the friendships that they have found by being introduced to the game of bridge.


"Our program has exceeded our wildest dreams. We feel the following items have been critical to our success:

**Commitment** - Early in the program, a student asked how long I would offer classes. I responded "as long as you keep coming, I'll be here." We have graduated from two sessions a week to four sessions a week. When you add in the time to prepare for the lessons and or playing sessions, the invested time is immense. Keeping the fees for our newcomers at a nominal rate was also very significant. I doubt any of our students would have continued for over a year paying normal fees for bridge lessons.

**Personal Attention** - We made it a priority to learn the names of our students and to

(See Helton on page 10)

**BOULDER BONANZA SPRING SECTIONAL**  
**April 30- May 2, 2010**  
**Boulder County Fairgrounds**  
**NE Corner of Hover & Nelson**  
**Longmont, Colorado**  
  
**NEW STRAT BREAK--B up to 1999!**  
**FRIDAY, APRIL 30**  
 9:30 am, 1:30 pm & 7:00 pm  
 Bracketed KO Teams, Semifinals & Finals (light lunch provided)  
 1:30 pm & 7:00 pm  
 Stratified 299er Pairs (0-49; 50-149; 150-299)  
 1:30 pm  
 Stratified Open Pairs (0-749; 750-1999; 2000+)  
 7:00 pm  
 Strati-Flighted Pairs (Flight X = 0-2999; A = 3000+; Mid-chart conv allowed; D/C/B = 0-199; 200-749; 750-1999)  
**SATURDAY, MAY 1**  
 10:00 am & 3:00 pm  
 Stratified 299er Pairs (0-49; 50-149; 150-299; single sessions)  
 Stratified Open Pairs (0-749; 750-1999; 2000+; single sessions accommodated)  
**SUNDAY, MAY 2**  
 10:00 am  
**Strati-Flighted Swiss Teams**  
 Flight X = 0-2999; A = 3000+; Mid-chart conventions allowed)  
 D/C/B = 0-199; 200-749; 750-1999  
 7 matches of 8 boards each with lunch break.  
 Lunch is provided. Approximate finish time: 6pm  
**Entry Fees**  
 Stratified and Open Events: \$8.00 per player, per session  
 Sunday Swiss Teams: \$88.00 per team (each add'l member \$6.50, includes meal)  
 Non-ACBL or non-dues paying members pay an additional \$1.00 per session  
 No entry fee for ACBL members with fewer than 5 masterpoints  
**Director in Charge Bill Michael**  
 Tournament Chair Karen Renne 303-499-1559 e-mail: karenrenne@att.net  
 Partnerships Reiko Raese 303-494-5537 e-mail: rrraese@yahoo.com  
 303-570-3850 (cell)  
**FREE COFFEE, SODA, & FABULOUS SNACKS EVERY DAY**  
 The playing area is wheel-chair accessible. Non-smoking tournament with hospitality breaks.  
 Unit 359 Sanction S 1005048

**Tucson Spring Sectional**  
  
**April 15, 16, 17 & 18, 2010**  
 Holiday Inn Palo Verde  
**Thursday, April 15**  
 7:00PM  
 Bracketed Knockout I (Round I)  
**Friday, April 16**  
 10:00AM & 3:00PM  
 Single Sessions Stratified Pairs  
 Single Sessions 199'er Pairs  
 Bracketed Knockout I (Rounds II & III)  
 7:30PM  
 Single Session Stratified Pairs  
 Bracketed Knockout II (Round I)  
**Saturday, April 17**  
 10:00AM & 3:00PM  
 Single Sessions Stratified Pairs  
 Single Sessions 199'er Pairs  
 Bracketed Knockout II (Rounds II & III)  
**Sunday, April 18**  
 10:00AM & TBA  
 Strati-flighted Swiss Teams (Two Sessions)  
 Stratified 199'er Swiss Teams (Two Sessions)  
**Complimentary Buffet Lunch for all 2 session players**  
 We offer Free Coffee and Tea, Candy, Lectures, Pre Dealt Hands with Hand Records and a Complimentary lunch for all two sessions Swiss Teams on Sunday  
**Holiday Inn Palo Verde**  
 4550 S. Palo Verde Blvd.  
 Tucson, AZ 85714  
 (520)746-1161  
 The Special Bridge Rate is \$89.00+ tax per night, single or double. In order to get this rate you MUST use our **Group Booking Code "AMC"**. Blocked rooms will be released on **March 18, 2010**  
**Fees: \$10.00** for dues paying ACBL Members and \$11.00 for all others.  
**Tournament Chair:** Barry Abrahams (520) 615-1712 or [BLincolnA@hotmail.com](mailto:BLincolnA@hotmail.com)  
**Director-in-Charge:** Gary Zeiger  
**Partnerships:** Brenda Sonderegger (520) 399-2112 [sonder@cox.net](mailto:sonder@cox.net)  
 Please visit our website at [www.SouthernArizonaBridge.com](http://www.SouthernArizonaBridge.com)  
**Stratified Events:** A=1500+; B=500-1500; C=0-500  
**199'er Pairs:** D=100-200; E=20-100; F=0-20  
**Knockouts:** Bracketed by average master point holdings of all team members  
 Top bracket may be handicapped  
**Strati-flighted Swiss Teams:** (All scored at Victory points)  
 A=3000+; Ax=0-3000; B= 0-1500; C=0-500  
**199'er Swiss Teams:** (All scored at Victory points)  
 E=100-200; F=0-100  
**Single session entries will be accommodated**  
 Sanction #0904037