



Rise. Rally. Raise.

Giving – and getting – back to normal

By Amy Casanova

Bridge - The Game That Gives Back

In 1937, when the ACBL was founded, more than 15 million Americans played bridge. Co-founder and Executive Secretary William McKenney, for whom the annual masterpoint race is named, is credited for “breathing the spirit of giving into the ACBL at its founding, and for endowing the organization with a charitable heart.” He formed and chaired the philanthropical organization dubbed the Sunshine Committee and sought to “(make) the hobby of bridge lovers serve humanity.”

The Charity Foundation was incorporated in 1964 and has since made substantial contributions to a wide range of charitable organizations. In 2005, the foundation began issuing grants to districts to distribute locally, rather than granting one large donation to a national Charity of the Year.

The dual challenges of declining membership and compromised fundraising efforts due to the pandemic are still being felt. There will be a prime opportunity for ACBL members to contribute to the foundation by playing in the upcoming charity games during the month of April.

Charity Games

- Virtual club games the week of April 10–16
- F2F Charity Club Championship games held the month of April – check your local club calendar
- F2F ACBL-wide charity games held March 28 and April 26
- Unit charity games – Units are allowed up to two charity games with funds going to the foundation

In 2020, a grant freeze went into effect and continues for the \$30,000 allocations provided to districts on a rotational basis and for grants submitted by ACBL members. The foundation resumed the annual \$15,000 in grant allocations for the local NABC tournament committees beginning in the fall of 2021.

The first NABC since COVID was held in Austin TX in 2021; the recipients were Central Texas Food Bank and Texas Parent to Parent, an organization that provides support, information and education for families of children and adults with disabilities.

Last year saw the first complete NABC cycle with \$5,000 granted to charities in Reno (Honor Flight Nevada and Casa de Vida Reno), Providence (multiple food banks across New England) and Phoenix (Arizona Foundation for Women). The committee for the upcoming spring NABC in New Orleans has selected the Second Harvest Food Bank as the beneficiary of their grant. The fall NABC in Atlanta has selected Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta, an organization providing pediatric healthcare throughout Georgia, with three hospitals and multiple neighborhood clinics.

The grants also honor the hard-working volunteer NABC communities. President of the Charity Foundation, Jackie Zayac, who chaired the Reno NABC, knows firsthand the districtwide effort that goes into hosting an NABC. “When we go into these cities, we expect the local players to volunteer, and they do,” she said. “They put in hours. I think it’s great to give them a grant to give to a charity in their community. It’s a win-win.”

The foundation has also resumed grant allocations of \$1000 each to district directors and \$2000 each to foundation trustees. The foundation stood with the people of Ukraine and donated \$25,000 from the proceeds of online charity games to UNICEF.

According to foundation treasurer Russ Jones, the foundation receives monies through club charity games, tournament charity games and private donations. “The only operating expenses we incur are accounting services, annual audits and website fees,” explained Jones. “The pandemic has greatly decreased the number of donations due to the reduction in club games and tournaments. Since we have no other source of revenue, this has caused the number of organizations we have been able to assist to be drastically reduced. We hope that with an increasing number of clubs being reactivated and an increase in tournament participation, we will be able to help others at a level consistent with our past.”

There are many new members who might have joined during the pandemic and are not aware of the rich history of charitable giving supported by the foundation. “Our outreach is wide – we have given millions of dollars to a multitude of diverse organizations,” said outgoing foundation president Nancy Strohmer. “We have the opportunity to make a real impact in communities where we give grant money, and many times, this changes the trajectory of an organization’s future.”

Playing in the charity games is a wonderful opportunity to give back while playing the game you love.

For more information, visit acblcharityfoundation.org. 🌐