

# Vero Beach Bridge Center



The Vero Beach Bridge Center is dynamic. There are so many examples that this club is a going concern! It's difficult to know where to start. Consider its history.

At one time, the Club could aptly be called the oldest established permanent floating bridge game in the South. It was founded about forty years ago and the first duplicate games were played at the various homes of the fifty or so original members—and sometimes at two places simultaneously. The game floated from the Elks Club, to the Library, to the Garden Club—but by the summer of 1995 their nomadic existence ceased.

Under leadership of **Bob Smith**, the president at the time, the members banded together to raise more than \$350,000 in donations and debenture notes in order to purchase and renovate the Old Sabal Palm Bowling Lanes. You have to be full of life to undertake a project of this magnitude! But they paid off their debt in seven years, including repairs. When you refurbish a Bowling Alley, your repairs are going to be awesome; when they needed a new roof, for example, it was a 20,000 square foot roof!

**Eleanor Bengyak**, described as the quintessential manager, always cooperative and superbly efficient, explained what happened when the club needed more parking. "In 2003 we purchased the lot to the north of us and turned it into an extension of our parking lot. We again received loans from our membership this time in the amount of \$285,000. We're in the process of paying it back."

How did this club become such a success? **Melody Gabriel**, editor of the monthly BRIDGE GAZETTE, said the teaching program is the backbone of the club, and the volunteers make it all work. **Jack Fisher**, the president, writes this in the spring edition, "A good part of our success is attributable to our education program and a hearty thank you goes to **Norm Hinds**, the members of his Education Committee, the teachers and the many volunteers that make the program so successful. A special thanks to **Nancy Conway** who

coordinated and managed the Celebrity Speakers program which was very well received."

He continues, "Thanks to *all* of our volunteers—you make the bridge club a very enjoyable place to come and play our favorite game. The tournaments are the talk of the surrounding area and, when any other job pops up that requires a person to get it done, two or three folks quickly volunteer. Amazing!"

Keeping in touch is part of the club's charm. It has the BRIDGE GAZETTE and a comprehensive website. **Jim Schorner**, the webmaster, provides an Internet copy of the monthly GAZETTE on line. He says, "This helps the half time 'snowbirds' keep up to date with the happenings at the club while they are away in the summer."

**Patty Johnson**, Chief ACBL Director for Florida, who directed both of the now annual sectional tournaments, says "The club, with its spaciousness and convenience, is a dream come true for a tournament director."

The Vero Beach Bridge Center has been an unqualified success—congratulations!

Vero Beach Bridge Center  
1520 14th Ave, Vero Beach, FL • (772) 562-3008



**Nancy Conway congratulating club manager Eleanor Bengyak on her birthday and anniversary which fall on the same day.**



**Norman Hinds, teacher, director, assistant editor, and Chairman of the Education Committee.**



**April Yeaton, the youngest member.**



**Beth Sexton-Stryker and her hearing dog Bandit who comes to the games and sleeps under the table!**



**Melody Gabriel, editor of THE BRIDGE GAZETTE, with daughter Deanna Dahl Rodriguez, who designed the club logo.**

**Jim Schorner, the webmaster.**



**Director Marie Troise.**



**Jack Fisher, newly elected president.**



**Teacher Jamie Portell with some Middle School students she brought to play in the pupil party.**