

Bridge players double charity efforts

By Herb Strentz

When it comes to helping families in need, ACBL members of Unit 216 in Central Iowa don't play the green card.

Rather, about 20 of them are among the community volunteers who help run the Des Moines-area FreeStore. The FreeStore is a not-for-profit, solely-volunteer operation that provides household items and furniture to women and their families when they leave domestic-abuse shelters and move into their own apartments and homes. The FreeStore assists more than 200 families each year.

"When women flee abusive relationships, they often do so with little more than their children and the clothes on their back," says bridge player Terry Swanson, one of the leaders of the FreeStore volunteers.

The efforts of the bridge players have been recognized and rewarded with a \$10,000 grant from the District 14 ACBL Charity Fund — tangible evidence of the good that is done when ACBL members kick in the extra dollar or two at charity events.



The FreeStore operates out of warehouse space provided by Principal Financial Group. Women and their families come to the warehouse to pick out the goods needed to help them start life anew. The FreeStore has two trucks used to pick up donations and deliver them to the new households.

ACBL members contribute generously to the annual FreeStore fund drive. The Mary B. Adrianse Bridge Center in West Des Moines serves as a collection point for donations of smaller household items.

Bridge Center players give their time, as well. They manage the warehouse operations. One is in charge

of all the kitchen items. Four Bridge Center players pick up donated furniture and others deliver the furniture to clients. One player schedules the pick-up teams and two are schedulers for the specific items to be picked up. Others volunteer for special jobs such as moving donated beds from local motels. Two players are on the FreeStore governing board: Terry Swanson is the board chairperson and Mike Smith is a board member. For more information about the FreeStore, see: www.thefreestore.org.

Big games

Lauren Block and Howard Friedman (twice), 76.49% and 76.67%, Bridge School of Long Island, East Meadow NY.

Doug Doub and Geoff Brod, 79.78%, Hartford Bridge Club, West Hartford CT.

Ken Bloom and Bill Irvine, 75.55%, The DBC of Winchester, Arlington MA.

Peter Szeesi and Herman Helber, 75.90%, Bridge Center, Arcadia CA.

Elaine Gargano and Lee Stern, 75.08%, BRIDGEExpress, Lake Success NY.



Bridge players work as volunteers at the FreeStore in Des Moines IA. Back row: Terry Swanson, Gary Oliphant, Kathi Kellen and Earl Lemke. Front row: Harry Swanson and Mike Smith.



Bridge player Lea Hollwager hands Harry Swanson one of six toasters she donated to the FreeStore in Des Moines IA.