

Chess master to teach his trade to students at recreation center

by Julie McMillan
Reporter

Twinsburg - Can learning to play a board game increase mental and academic skills and increase a person's chances of success at the game of life?

Aleksandr Kitsis, a national chess master, thinks so, and hopes to convince young residents to try the game through classes he will teach at the Twinsburg Recreation Activities Center on Ravenna Road.

"We're trying to make parents aware of the benefits of chess," Kitsis said. "It affects cognitive abilities, improves math skills. It polishes intellectual abilities the way sport improves physical abilities."

The classes at the TRAC building begin Nov. 11. Kitsis said the classes will involve the theory of chess and training exercises, as well as playing actual games.

Kitsis said a number of studies have demonstrated the benefits of the game, even if the player never reaches the level of a grand champion of chess.

"In today's world, unless a person is able to think, he is unable to succeed," Kitsis said. "I'm trying to use chess as a tool to increase intelligence and academic performance."

Kitsis said each move in the game is a decision the player has to make, creating a pattern of play. He uses the patterns which emerge as the student plays to improve his or her skill.

When players are ready, Kitsis said he has them compete with other students in the class. Eventually, players who continue to develop their skills enter into wider-ranging contests.

Kitsis said a number of his students have gone on to achieve success at regional, state and national chess competitions. He displays the evidence of his students' achievements on his company's Web site, www.vivacityinc.com.

Kitsis said he began playing chess when he was in kindergarten in Kishenev, Moldova, where he was born. His grandmother would take him to a chess club at a nearby school, and he has been playing the game ever since.

Kitsis emigrated to Cleveland 10 years ago from Moldova, once part of the former Soviet Union, along with his wife, Elvira, and two children. His son, Viktor, is now 14 years old and his daughter, Polina, is 11.

After coaching chess part-time in Moldova and in the United States, Kitsis said he decided to focus on teaching the game to young would-be players full time. He teaches through schools and community centers in South Euclid, Orange, Mayfield, Mayfield Village and Beachwood in addition to the classes in Twinsburg.

Kitsis said he hopes to spread the word about chess in Northeast Ohio and is searching for funding to establish pilot chess programs in schools. Those interested in his chess program can contact him at 440-461-3634.

Residents can call the Twinsburg Parks and Recreation Department at 330-963-8722 for more information or can register at the TRAC building or the Twinsburg Fitness Center.

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