

# ACBL MANAGEMENT REPORT

## Fall 2019 – San Francisco CA

### Club & Member Services

#### Membership

ACBL membership stands at 162,825 as of November 1, 2019. This reflects a decrease of 1.0% since January 1, 2019. YTD new member enrollment decreased 7.1% from same period last year. Full membership statistics can be viewed at [Membership Trend Report October 2019](#)

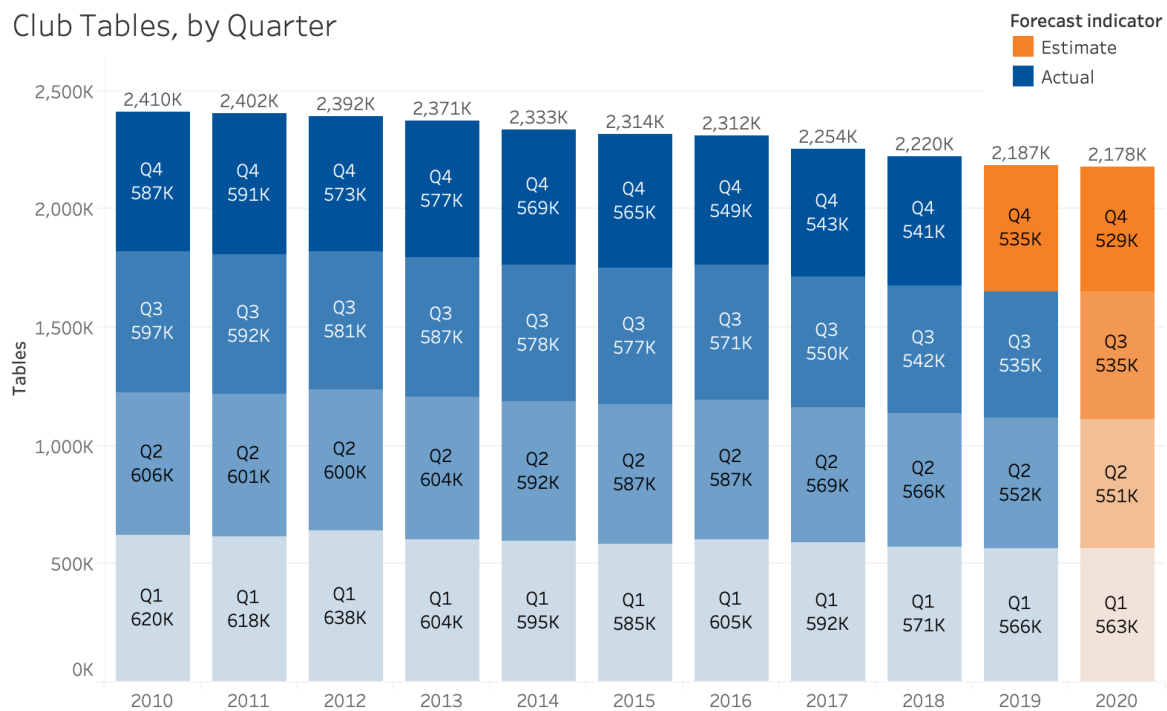
#### Membership Auto-Renewal

The Membership Auto-Renewal program launched on February 12. As of November 15, 11,398 members (24% of online renewal transactions during that period; about 7% of all members) have opted to enroll in this program. We expect this number to grow as more members are due for renewal. (See also *Information Technology—Marketing & Membership* below.)

#### Club Tables

**Face-to-face club tables** are down 1.55% YTD (through September) when compared to the same period last year. Our forecast for 2019 estimates a total of 2,187K tables for the full year, or 1.5% fewer than in 2018.

Club Tables, by Quarter



**Online tables** are up 7.1% for the same period, mostly due to BBO's introduction of Daylong Tournaments in December 2018.

Check the [full report](#) for more information.

## **Club Special Games**

North American Pairs club-level games held in June, July and August 2019 increased by nearly 6% from 2018. Total tables in 2019 were 98,047.5, an increase of 5,376.5 tables.

Also showing year-to-date increases from 2018 are International Fund games (12.6%), Junior Fund games (9.3%) and Grass Roots Fund games (2.0%). We expect Educational Foundation games table counts to increase considerably in 2020 as February has been designated as Educational Foundation month.

## **Club Game Sanction Renewals**

An email was sent to all clubs last month asking them to renew their 2020 club game sanctions and to register for the ACBL-wide events being held next year. Nearly 1,400 clubs have submitted their sanction renewal online.

## *Finance*

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A slight drop off for the month of October with revenues not meeting budget expectations by \$91K but with expenses in line with the budget. Compared to 2018, October's revenues and expenses were down \$151K and \$43K, respectively. For the month, the loss from operations of \$120K was \$87K more than budgeted.

Tournament revenue for October was down as compared to budget due to fewer sessions, significantly fewer tables and two fewer regional tournaments. Tournament director and club revenues were 14.7% and 2.7% below budget respectively. In addition, Regional tables were lower than expected with Sectional tables higher than expected. Tournament Director expenses were in line with budget. With tournament director expense in line with budget, management feels that tournament revenue decrease could be due to the timing of month-end tournaments where session revenue has not been yet recorded.

Even with the October decrease, year-to-date revenue still exceeds budget by \$267K. Membership dues continue to fall below the budget by 1.3%. The YTD gain from operations of \$955K is \$417K better than budgeted and is \$863K better than the prior year. In addition, total expenses are down \$571K as compared to the prior year.

## *Human Resources*

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### **Headcount**

**Headquarters:** 57 full-time

**Field:** 34 full time, 118 part-time

**Total:** 209 employees

### **Staff News**

Effective 12/29/2019:

- **Charlie MacCracken**, after 46½ years, will move from full-time Area Manager to part-time Tournament Director

- **Candie Kushner**, after 26 years, will retire as part-time Tournament Director
- **Doug Grove**, after almost 31 years, will retire as part-time Tournament Director

### ***2020 Employee Benefits***

We are conducting open enrollment for 2019 benefits and will continue to offer Medical, Dental, Vision, Life, ADD, and Short-Term/Long-Term Disability coverage for eligible employees. We are offering medical insurance through Cigna. Though medical premiums will increase by 14.8%, the rates are 16% below the renewal rates quoted by United Healthcare. Dental premiums have increase 5% and Vision premiums remain flat. There are no plan design changes for 2020.

### ***Facilities***

We have entered into a one-year agreement with Mechanic Systems for preventive HVAC maintenance, repair, and limited system and parts replacement. We expect this partnership to reduce repairs and equipment expenses, as well as increase efficiencies.

## ***NABC***

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### ***Housing Management***

Following a competitive bidding process, the ACBL transitioned its NABC housing services provider from OnPeak, LLC to ConferenceDirect, LLC effective for NABCs after January 1, 2020. Our ConferenceDirect representative is busy reviewing existing hotel contracts for 2020 and after and suggesting revisions to contract provisions as well as making suggestions for re-flowing the ACBL's room night commitment to more closely match recent demand. We have renegotiated just over 30% of our existing hotel contracts. We were able to negotiate a new hotel contract with The Row (Reno, NV) in 2028, including 85 staff rooms at a 20% discount, and are currently in negotiations for 100 staff rooms at a 50% discount with the Philadelphia Marriot for both Summer 2025 and 2030 (compared to our usual 15-35 discounted staff rooms), a savings of approximately 40% in staff lodging expense at these three events. In addition, ConferenceDirect will shortly upload all three of the reservations' websites for the 2020 NABCs and we expect that they will be open to members on our usual schedule.

### ***Future NABC Locations***

ACBL management currently is analyzing sites for the Spring of 2025. We are reviewing Memphis as an option and working to negotiate pricing for the to be newly renovated Memphis Cook Convention Center during that year.

Kansas City and Louisville may also be good sites for Spring 2024 or 2025. Mark Hudson and the ConferenceDirect representative visited six downtown Kansas City hotels in June, including a new 750-room Loews Hotel, currently under construction, that will be physically attached to their convention center. All of these hotels fit our needs. As bridge play would be in the convention center, we plan to utilize three downtown hotels in the surrounding area. The team also visited Louisville and the Galt House where the Spring 2011 NABC was held. The Galt House is undergoing a full renovation that will be completed in 2020. They also visited another option of using the newly renovated convention center for game play along with three

downtown hotels. Other sites are also being reviewed for Spring 2025, including Dallas, Houston and Oklahoma City.

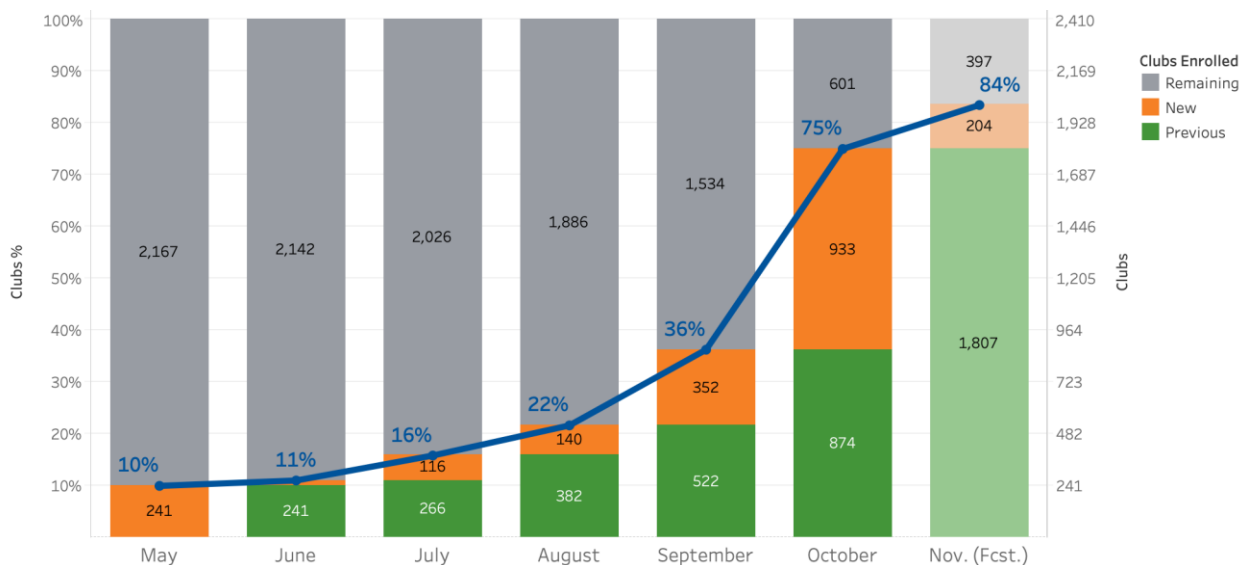
We'll present a site recommendation for Philadelphia in the Summer of 2025 and 2030 to the Board during the Fall NABC and will continue to work with the NABC Review Committee to find other suitable sites for open dates.

## Information Technology

### Live for Clubs

Technical plan is on track to deliver by January 2020, with the requirement for clubs to use by February 2020. With our efforts on personally contacting all the clubs, we have:

- Successfully moved from 874 clubs enrolled by the end of September to 1,807 a month later (about 75% of total active clubs). Over 60% of those clubs loaded all of their October games.



- Re-Launched the *Live for Clubs Uploader* for all clubs based on a request from early-adopting clubs;
- Created the initial code for Club Billing and Financial Reporting; this is currently being employee tested and plans are to have clubs BETA test in December.
- Added a “Personal Scores” feature to Live for Clubs
- Supported the clubs on Live for Clubs answering many phones calls and sending over 200 support emails;
- New Masterpoints Engine with Masterpoints Committee testing – we have now determined that we will utilize internal resources to do all the testing and have a validation process by the Masterpoints Committee after we complete it.

### Business Intelligence

Continued efforts with Data Analytics via use of Tableau. Continue training with several employees and further usage of Tableau to understand data, gaps and opportunities.

## **Cashless Strategy**

- Completed evaluation of **Square**, a credit card payment option for tournament entry fees
- Created a device allocation plan (to be implemented in San Francisco)
  - Bought/repurposed devices for each full-time TD
  - Will create a roll-out strategy to begin 1/1/2020 that encompasses all National's, Regionals and most Sectionals working with Operations team
- Training
  - Finalized item and category structure for NABC financials
  - Wrote documentation and created videos on 'how-to' use the device for TD's
  - Continue to train TD's as we've been testing; will finalize TD training in San Francisco
- Technical integration
  - Created integration/changes in Great Plains accounting software as needed
  - Created requirements for automation of item creation from TourneyTrax to Square

## **AS/400 Migration**

- Evaluation of Membership tools, capability, usage, and cost
- Benchmark with two companies to evaluate Membership tools
- Creating a new organization model to support the migration, data ownership, oversight and quality
- Connectria continues to monitor and support the AS/400 (24x7x365).

## **Marketing & Membership**

### RECRUITMENT INCENTIVES PROGRAM

- Worked with marketing to ensure that payments went out to the recruiters.
- Prioritized items for future development

### AUTO-RENEW – PHASE 2

- Automated updates between payment system and Membership records
- Working on additional email notifications for members & employees
- Reviewing data found that over 11,000 members have currently enrolled in Auto-Renewal program;
- 24% of all online renewals use our Auto-Renewal program
  - Evaluating impact for coming years

## **Accounting**

- On Pay Solution -The vendor is assisting the accounting department as needed with the finalizing the steps for implementation of this vendor/supplier ePayment program
- Great Plains testing with On-Pay, providing support for payouts to Units and Recruiters

## **Bridge Operations**

- Tournament technology
  - In an effort to better enable players to understand and ‘physically see’ assignments, we have launched an updated “VIEW” solution. This effort is a part of a larger initiative to project information for players; remove old/outdated printers and to allow TD’s to more effectively seat players.
  - Tested in Las Vegas and several Regionals and will be testing to finalize requirements in San Francisco
- ACBLscore – continue to work on minor fixes
- TourneyTrax – working on minor fixes

## **Infrastructure & Operations**

- Creating and Implementing repeatable process for configuring and testing tech hardware for NABC
- Working with AT&T on implementation of new internet and phone circuit for HQ
- Coordinated with Club Support TDs to configure support VPN phones. This will support the new circuit migration as IPs will change for HQ
- Completed installation of power redundancy in HQ server room
- Coordinated efforts with field employees with company laptops to update Windows as the latest patches/updates were causing issues

## **Field Operations & Bridge Administration**

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### **Staffing**

San Francisco will debut a new NABC DiC, Ken Horwedel. Ken is working with his team and Bridge Operations Manager, Brian Weikle, to review and simplify processes that support the tournament. In particular they are looking to enable exporting of data from TourneyTrax to create reports for items like schedules, hand record files, and staffing.

### **Cashless Entry Sales**

Training and roll out of **Square** tournament entry fee payment option (an alternative to PurplePass) will occur at the San Francisco. iPads used for PurplePass will be handed to full-time TDs for use with Square.

### **Planning for 2020**

#### SESSION TRACKING

Area Managers were tasked with outlining the proposed schedules for all full-time Tournament Directors. Although not all the 2020 tournaments are scheduled, the managers are able to look at historical information to predict who will work where. This information will be reviewed and updated monthly as the actual sanctions are approved and the staffing assignments are made.

This information will also be updated monthly with actual information as soon as the tournaments are completed.

#### SKILLS REVIEW

Specific criteria and supporting skills tests are being built to ensure that TDs understand what skills are required to advance in rank. These documents will also assist Managers in developing their staff.

#### TOURNAMENT TABLE COUNTS

- Regional table count continues to trend down about 5% from last year. Much of this is driven by a larger number of NLM Regionals, which are popular with players and Districts but tend to be smaller than Open Regionals. A large table count decline in October is accounted for by two large Regionals (Charlotte and Council Bluffs) occurring in October 2018 but in a different month in 2019. Eighteen Regionals (including 4 IN and 2 Cruise) are scheduled in November 2019 vs. only 11 in 2018, so overall tables for the year should catch up somewhat.
- Sectional table count is down only slightly from last year, averaging approximately 4 tables fewer per tournament. STaC attendance is down only 2 tables per event. Slightly fewer STaCs have been run in 2019 leading to an overall table count decline of about 6%.
- Check the [full report](#) for additional information.

#### BRIDGE OPS SUPPORT TEAM

The volume of calls from clubs for help with ACBLscore has increased in the last few months. Work is in process to evaluate the methodology and staffing required to support our users.

#### ***Office of National Recorder***

The Office of National Recorder team consists of National Recorder Robb Gordon and Compliance Coordinator Sabrina Goley. They continue to provide phone and email support to members, Unit and District Officials involved in the disciplinary process, and the national disciplinary committees. We are currently focused on the transition to consolidate disciplinary activity to our 25 Districts.

To become more efficient in working with our District Recorders, we are starting to forward information to them along with Player Memos that they might require including contact information for the involved parties as well as a 5-year history of Player Memos for the subject.

As always, our resources are extensive and available at [www.acbl.org/ethics](http://www.acbl.org/ethics). They include flowcharts, checklists, standardized forms, FAQs, and previously published articles by the National Recorder.

There are numerous ways to originate a Player Memo:

- Turn it in to a Tournament Director
- Turn it in to the local Recorder
- Complete it online at [acbl.org/playermemo](http://acbl.org/playermemo)
- At NABC's drop it into one of the Player Memo boxes

Regardless of how the Player Memo has originated the process operates as follows:

- A. If initially received by the Office of National Recorder, either physically or online, the Player Memo is forwarded, as appropriate, to the Recorder of the body (Unit, District, National/ACBL) having jurisdiction.\*
- B. If initially received by the Unit or District Recorder having jurisdiction, that Recorder investigates but forwards a copy of the Player Memo, and if appropriate, the investigation to the Office of National Recorder to store in our database.\*

\* Will be consolidated at Districts starting January 1, 2020.

## RECORDER DEPARTMENT METRICS

### PLAYER MEMO REPORT AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

	2018 Spring	2018 Summer	2018 FALL	2018	2018	2019 Spring	2019 Summer	2019	2019
	NABC	NABC	NABC	Non-NABC	TOTAL	NABC	NABC	Non-NABC	YTD TOTAL
<b>Total Player Memos Reported*</b>	41	40	32	212	325	38	34	144	216
Conduct	13	15	14	92	134	8	12	46	66
Bridge Related	17	14	9	37	77	17	19	42	78
Ethics	7	11	10	84	112	18	8	67	93
Other	6	0	2	8	16	2	1	11	14
<b>Number of Player Memos Handled By:</b>									
Unit Recorder	N/A	N/A	N/A	55	55	N/A	N/A	31	31
PM resulted in Charges brought by Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	N/A	N/A	6	6
District Recorder	N/A	N/A	N/A	86	86	N/A	N/A	60	60
PM resulted in Charges brought by District	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	3	N/A	N/A	3	3
National Recorder	41	40	32	53	166	38	34	39	111
PM resulted in Charges brought by ACBL Mgmt.	0	4	0	2	6	2	1	12	15
PM resulted in Charges brought by DIC	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	2
Other (Filed or Club Matter)	N/A	N/A	N/A	18	18	N/A	N/A	14	14
<b>Player Memo Sent to ACC</b>	2	6	2	17	27	5	3	21	29

**Key:**

PM = Player Memo

\* Player Memos reported may fall into more than one category

## Marketing

### Digital Marketing

The new website [trybridge.org](http://trybridge.org) has launched, targeting non-players and social players. The aim of this new website is increasing awareness about bridge so that more people consider learning how to play.

Our marketing agency is currently running advertising tests to understand what messaging, audience segmentation and search keywords are most effective for attracting prospect players to the website and generate student leads for teachers and clubs. Current testing uses the platforms Facebook and Google.

Next steps include expanding [trybridge.org](http://trybridge.org) to include additional learning resources as well as additional investment in ads placement. Early next year we'll run an internal campaign (email, social media, Bulletin) targeting members, clubs, units and districts asking them to promote [trybridge.org](http://trybridge.org) among family, friends and colleagues.



## ***Recruitment Incentives***

After a Beta Test with 25 clubs/teachers from May 6 through September 3, the new recruitment program was opened to all eligible members: registered teachers, club managers and active club directors (about 10,400 members are eligible). Recruiters receive an email notification whenever a new member formally joins. Between May and September, over \$14,300 were earned by ACBL recruiters. The first round of incentive checks was sent in October.

We are excited by the response from recruiters and are continuing to work to automate the process and look for easier ways to pay such as ACH transfer.

## ***Guest Membership***

The implementation of the guest membership option in our systems is currently on hold, as we evaluate different software products for our membership management system as part of the AS/400 exit strategy.

## ***Social Media***

**Facebook** is the primary social media platform utilized to engage our members. As of November 10, the page has 8877 followers. Content is added regularly and features a variety of topics such as winners, historic photographs, famous quotes and bridge articles such as It's Your Call hands (the most popular posts).

We use **Twitter** as a tool to promote the ACBL and bridge to media outlets and to connect members to articles written about the organization. As of November 10, our Twitter account has 2701 followers.

Additionally, we have continued to grow the ACBL's **Instagram** page, created in early 2017, to share photos from the NABCs. Regular posts range from submitted photos from clubs, historical event photos, quotes and promotional graphics. As of November 10, the account has 870 followers.

## ***Marketing Solutions, powered by Pianola®***

In late 2018, ACBL extended the funding for this custom-made email tool for an additional year. Since then, Marketing Solutions — which allows units and districts to easily connect with members — has received several technical improvements, allowing units and districts to reach more members in their area.

**The current contract between ACBL and Pianola concludes at the end of 2019.** Units and districts that want to continue using Marketing Solutions in 2020 will need to contract directly with Pianola. We've negotiated special discount packages for units and districts, with pricing starting at one half US cent per email.

If units and districts choose to keep using Marketing Solutions and contract directly with Pianola, the process is easy: Units and districts visit [pianola.net/acbl](http://pianola.net/acbl) for pricing and to contact Pianola. Additionally, James Ward, Pianola's CEO, will be available at the San Francisco NABC to meet with anyone who prefers a face-to-face discussion.

This transition was initially announced in September's Management Update, and emails detailing the transition were sent in October to all users, as well as unit and district officers.

## ***E-marketing and Communication***

As of November 10, the ACBL has sent 564 separate email campaigns targeting various member segments in 2019. Email topics include event promotions, program information, member updates, rank change announcements and more. These numbers do not include automated transactional messages, such as ACBL Live results or renewal notifications.

## ***Media Relations***

Marketing has been continuing to utilize its new media tracking and contact database, Meltwater. Meltwater's Media Monitoring Suite tracks media coverage of more than three million news services, as well as social media mentions over 17 social platforms, giving ACBL daily updates on pertinent news coverage. Meltwater's Influencer Database allows us to proactively build media contact lists based on a variety of customizable searches, including location and reporter focus areas. We have found this to be especially useful when promoting NABCs.

These tools will allow us to proactively pitch ACBL content to the best media sources, build media contact lists that Districts and Units can utilize in their media relations efforts and track media clips across North America.

## ***The Longest Day/Alzheimer's Association Partnership***

ACBL clubs across the United States shattered 2018's record-breaking fundraising year for The Longest Day by raising more than \$1.2 million in 2019, a \$50,000 increase over the previous year (clubs in Canada participated in a similar event, "A Day of Bridge", to benefit the Alzheimer Society of Canada).

Teams are already starting to organize for 2020, and like the past two years, clubs will be able to choose their Longest Day during the week of the Summer Solstice, June 17-24.

## ***Cooperative Advertising Program***

As of November 11, \$47,612 has been reimbursed to 107 clubs and teachers through the Cooperative Advertising Program (CAP). CAP will reimburse 50% of the cost of an ad campaign up to a maximum of \$500 per reimbursement (for qualifying ads). Average reimbursement is \$299.45 per ad campaign.

## ***Education***

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### ***Best Practices Teacher Certification Program***

The new Best Practices Teacher Certification Program was rolled out in early 2018. This program replaces the previous Teacher Accreditation Program and focuses on training teachers how to teach rather than what to teach.

Optional proficiency assessments are offered after each workshop to allow participants to earn the new Best Practices Teacher Certification. To date, 227 teachers have earned the certification. Best Practices teachers receive a gold pin, exclusive marketing materials and are highlighted in the Find-a-Teacher search results on ACBL's website.

Eight workshops were scheduled to be held in 2019, including the San Francisco NABC, and at this point, five are scheduled for 2020. We expect a few more to be added as interest from Units and Districts grows.

### **School Bridge Program**

<i>Programs</i>	<b>2015</b>		<b>2016</b>		<b>2017</b>		<b>2018</b>		<b>2019</b>	
	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall
<b>College</b>	7	9	3	20	15	29	29	35	37	35
<b>High</b>	51	40	11	29	20	11	14	35	13	13
<b>Middle</b>	102	167	57	68	32	43	33	79	35	34
<b>Elementary</b>	72	89	14	99	66	47	35	49	34	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>537</b>		<b>301</b>		<b>263</b>		<b>309</b>		<b>225</b>	

<i>Teacher Stipends</i>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
<b>US</b>	\$138,900	\$69,750	\$46,686	\$43,950	\$33,300
<b>Canada</b>	\$50,050	\$28,093	\$27,665	\$20,650	\$14,000
<b>Total</b>	\$188,950	\$97,843	\$74,351	\$64,600	\$47,300

The decrease in the number of school bridge programs over the past few years is largely due to the reclassification of lessons series. Prior to 2016, stipends were paid to teachers for every eight students they instructed. Under that execution, a class of 24 students would have been counted as three separate classes with three separate stipends. With the policy revision, a class of 24 students is counted as one class, and the teacher receives one stipend.

For 2019 we have sent supplies to support 2740 students taking bridge lessons.

### **College Programs**

In 2019 we are working with over 40 schools in which we support bridge clubs and coaches with stipends and bridge supplies thanks to a generous grant from the ACBL Educational Foundation.

In addition, through a partnership with Bridge Base Online, college students have access to the College Bridge Online (CBO) Club, a free and exclusive online bridge club which offers daily individual practice tournaments, free robot rental and bi-monthly special tournaments with masterpoints prizes. With over 69,000 individual entries since October 2017, these online games have become quite popular with college students.

The 2019 Collegiate Bridge Bowl was held at the 2019 Summer NABC. In addition to the eight teams winning travel packages, six teams paid their own way to play in the event, bringing the total to 14, **by far the largest turnout we've had**. Scholarships were awarded for first through fourth place for the team event.

In addition to the team event, we held stratified pairs events on Friday and Saturday with **38 pairs** playing in the two-session championship on Saturday.

All collegiate players were invited to a brunch on Saturday morning, generously sponsored by the Ed Foundation and a special guest, James Holzhauer, the popular Jeopardy! winner featured in the July 2019 Bridge Bulletin.

### ***Youth NABC in Las Vegas***

The Youth NABC in Las Vegas was the largest to date with 250 kids and 310 tables over three days.

In addition to the T-shirt and book bag, participants were treated to a hot lunch every day as well as an awards ceremony on the last day that featured special guest James Holzhauer.

### ***Lifelong Learning***

In 2019, more than 1100 students have taken bridge lessons through 57 programs at 37 college or university lifelong learning programs. This is a 4% increase over the number of students in through the same period in 2018 with around the same number of participating schools.

ACBL is an officially recognized Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) curriculum resource. In addition to OLLI, we also support bridge through several other unassociated lifelong learning programs.

### ***Learn Bridge in a Day?®, Notrump in a Day and Doubles in a Day***

The ACBL hosts a *Learn Bridge in a Day? (LBIAD)* seminar and the corresponding teacher training course at each NABC. In addition to *LBIAD*, we offered Patty Tucker's *Notrump in a Day* in Memphis. We premiered a new Takeout and Negative Doubles class in Las Vegas and will offer it in San Francisco as well. We will continue to look for new and exciting seminars to help Intermediate/Newcomer players develop their game.