

Canasta Class – A COA Service and a Key to Friendship

Among the many activities offered by the Council on Aging (COA), the opportunity to learn how to play games, such as bridge, backgammon, chess, or Mahjong is particularly important for many seniors who live alone. Mental challenge and new companionship are sought even more than a winning score as reasons for learning new games.

In October 2019 Pat Grainger offered a course on playing Standard American Canasta at the COA facility in the Harvey Wheeler Community Center. Eight seniors signed up to take the course – Joy, Ruth, Carol and Carl, John and Phyllis, Faye, and Teri. This pre-pandemic training course was a success.

The group persevered through the twists and turns of learning the exciting dynamics of red and black canastas with special hands, the values of red and black threes and what to do with sevens and aces. Pat was a cheerful, supportive teacher, and all participants enjoyed her warm leadership. The group played in tables of four or in partnerships of two people.

This new set of Canasta friends continued to enjoy the game together until the pandemic lock down started in March 2020. Thereafter the group members continued to check in on each other and some played Canasta individually in pairs, but not as a group of foursomes given the Covid requirements. The net result was that multiple ongoing friendships were continued, and the Canasta skills acquired at the Council on Aging continued to be enjoyed. Playing Canasta together supported caring initiatives among the Canasta friends to reduce isolation throughout the pandemic.

In March 2022 the pandemic restrictions ended, and the COA is open again for in-person activities, Concord seniors can return to learn new games, enjoy recreational activities, and make new friends to establish more healthy social connections that are so essential to living a happy full life at any age.

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Canasta for Two: Deal 15 cards to start. Score threes, red/black canastas, card values.