

# Bridging friendships

*Card game is fun way to compete, interact with other people*

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Eric Sieg hopes he's starting a new card-playing trend for a younger generation.

A generation who's idea of a good card game involves five-card stud or Texas Hold 'em.

But Sieg wasn't making poker bets this weekend. In fact, the sophomore from the University of Oklahoma was playing bridge – for bragging rights and the chance to become Rookie of the Year in his area.

Sieg was the youngest player in attendance Sunday at the annual three-day bridge tournament sponsored by the Hutchinson Duplicate Bridge Club.

As of Saturday afternoon, he said he and his partner, Eric Bell, a staff member in health services at OU, were in third place overall in their area. It's quite a feat for Sieg, who attended his first tournament last weekend.

Tournament chairwoman Ardy Alexander was thrilled when she saw Sieg among the 300 other players in attendance throughout the weekend.

A bridge advocate, Alexander said she's working to attract a younger crowd to the card game. In some areas, schoolchildren learn the game to work on math skills. Alexander, though, said it teaches much more.

"It's a great people-interactive game," she said. "You learn discipline and other rules you need to live by. You make friends."

The hard part, though, is going beyond perceptions when attracting a younger crowd, Sieg said.

"It's hard to convince people to play," he said. "There's a perception that it's just for old people. All they (young people) want to play is poker."

Bridge's complexity also draws some away, Bell said. He learned to play in the college dorms with some of his roommates.

"There's a stigma of it being difficult," Bell said, "but it's basic strategy."

Sieg might have been the youngest player this weekend, but Prairie Hills Middle School eighth-graders Kyle Brown and Gary Triaffas were the youngest in attendance.

Both boys served the role as caddies, picking up and entering cards and helping out tournament director Dorothy Derr during the weekend.

Brown wants to learn how to



**Eric Sieg, a sophomore at the University of Oklahoma, organizes his cards during the bridge tournament hosted by the Hutchinson Duplicate Bridge Club at the Kansas State Fairgrounds. Sieg was the youngest player to attend the event.**

BY LINDSEY BAUMAN

play the game but said his grandpa hasn't taught him yet.

Triaffas, though, wanted a game that had more action.

"I've never been into card games," he said. "I like the video games – action and adventure ones."