



EMMA MACNIVEN/KMG

West Geauga Senior Center teams "Chesterland Traenor" and "Chesterland Mog" are joined by Recreation/Education Coordinator Christine Bacon, front, during the second round of the Mind Challenge April 30.

Mind Challenge Gives Seniors a Way to Stay Sharp, Social

By EMMA MACNIVEN
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What began as an effort to get seniors out of their homes and engaged with others has grown into a regionwide trivia-style competition designed to keep minds sharp and communities connected.

Phil Levine and Art Greenberg, retired broadcast executives, launched the Mind Challenge eight years ago.

"It was designed to get seniors out of their homes, to socialize, to have them use their

brains," Levine said during the West Geauga Senior Center's second-round event April 30.

Modeled in a format similar to NCAA-style Jeopardy competition, the Mind Challenge brings together senior teams from across Northeast Ohio each spring for a four-week tournament held at participating senior centers.

Levine said the program now includes teams in 11 host cities, stretching from Austintown to Wickliffe, Brook Park and Chester Township.

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Around 75 communities are represented across Northeast Ohio, Greenberg said.

Teams wager points based on confidence in their answers, Levine explained.

The West Geauga Senior Center serves as the host site for the East region, which includes 11 teams representing communities such as Chester Township, Kirtland, Willoughby Hills, Mentor and Perry Township.

There is no limit to the number of teams a senior center or community can enter, and participation is free for players, teams and centers, according to the program's website.

Questions span a wide range of topics, including Ohio geography, vintage baseball, farming and tools.

"It brings them together (and) kind of eliminates that isolation," said West Geauga Senior Center Recreation/Education Coordinator Christine Bacon. "It's so important as you get older to work your mind, just like you have to exercise to work your body. You have to exercise your mind. That's what this is all about."

South Russell Village resident Betty Mog is competing in the program for the fourth time.

"I'm so glad that West G is doing it," Mog said. "It's been fun going around to see the other centers in other years and this keeps me humble, when I think I know something (and) find out I don't."

The program is supported by sponsors who set up booths at events and contribute to prize funds awarded to senior centers. Winning centers use the money to support



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Phil Levine and Art Greenberg started the Mind Challenge eight years ago to help seniors socialize and sharpen their brains.

programming, Levine said.

Prizes include \$2,500 for first place, \$1,500 for second place and \$1,000 for third place, he said.

Many participants begin attending senior center activities after joining the Mind Challenge and discovering available programs, Bacon added.

"I enjoy the camaraderie and the fun aspect of the game. It is very challenging," Burton resident Bob Wilkin said.

The competition continues for two more weeks before finals are held May 27 in Independence, Levine said.

"(It) keeps us stimulated with our brains and active with other people," Mentor resident Frances Meinke said. "We enjoy the challenge, it makes you think. None of us have the same knowledge base. Some are good in sports, some are good at president history."