



Scott County Chess Club

Annual Report to Scott County - 2022

We want to begin by expressing our sincere appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to create the Scott County Chess Club and most importantly for the partnership with the Central Mississippi Regional Library System. We could not have come this far without your cooperation and support. We want to thank Branch Manager Dianne McLaurin and former children's librarian Brandi Nordan for their support at the Forest branch. They are a big part of our success in getting started and remaining active.

It has been an amazing four years since we started our club in May 2018. I was inspired to do so when my son, Aaron, taught me how to play when he was seven years old in the second grade after learning the game in gifted class at Forest Elementary School. We began with two interest meetings to attract anyone interested in the game and it grew from there. The Friends of the Forest Library were so supportive and generous to purchase and donate 5 chess sets that are kept at the library for patrons to use during their visits.

I named the club the **Scott County** Chess Club because I wanted to convey the message of being open to all persons in the area. We first started using the meeting room at the Forest branch and moved out into the main area of the library for more visibility. Since the game is naturally quiet, it didn't pose trouble with other patrons. We established meetings on the first Saturday of each month from 9 to 11 a.m. and gradually, people started to participate. Before long, we had as many as 20 or more people attending fairly regularly. And then COVID hit, and we were shut down.

We returned in September 2021 and basically had to rebuild as many people drifted away since they had gotten out of the habit of coming. We have seen new faces come in, however, and that is encouraging. I have also had chess friends from a club in Pearl come over to play with our local members. Mrs. McLaurin allowed me to have a display set up at the Back-to-School Bash last fall. That helped to attract attention to the club.

Through the connections I made in the chess community across the state, and participating in tournaments in other locations, I took our club to a new level in November by hosting our first tournament. While visiting Roosevelt State Park for other activities, I noticed that Alfreda-Harris Lodge would be a perfect venue for a chess tournament. Therefore, I organized the Roosevelt Chess Classic which included individuals and team play. I recruited local businesses to chip in as sponsors in raising money for the prizes. On November 13, we had 46 players come from across Mississippi, and some from Tennessee, Louisiana, and Florida to Scott County to play chess. First place winner in the Open section took home \$200 and other first place winners received trophies. Prizes were also awarded to other players placing high in the competition. Friends I have made in the chess community served as my tournament directors.

The tournament was well received and caught the attention of the state association. State chess leaders brought the scholastic team tournament to Roosevelt State Park in January 2022 and more than 70 kids across the state participated. At both the state tournament and my tournament, a display was on scene noting our club's presence and partnership with CMRLS.

One of our reasons for choosing the library is that it is a great hub of community activity and provides a great location. Forest has the only branch open on Saturdays which is the only time available even if for only two hours. While we have had good turnouts, I have had people tell me they want to come but the time slot was not convenient. In January 2022, I arranged for a second meeting location for the afternoons of the same days at the library. Foothills gift shop and restaurant agreed to be a host for 1 until 3 p.m. The idea was to create as much access to the game as possible. However, the turnout I expected did not materialize so for now I have suspended that option. However, the library will always be our base and remains active.

Most of our publicity is through social media including Facebook and some Twitter. *The Scott County Times* has been generous in publishing material that I send. I send monthly email blasts to members and others. In January 2022, I started a club newsletter produced and distributed online for members and others interested in our activities. I realized in December that my regular emails to members were too long. Therefore, I created the newsletter which is available as a PDF and attached to email. All the details are made available without the emails being so long.

I have been in touch with the branch manager at Morton's Public Library and we have discussed options to make chess available in that location. We are still working on the details. I would like to explore opportunities with Lake and Sebastopol libraries based on their available resources.

I received certification from the U.S. Chess Federation to serve as a club tournament director. This allows me to host tournaments and supervise rated games for member players. The Scott County Chess Club became an affiliate of the Federation as well as the state association. I have planned to host two major tournaments each year – one in the spring and one in the fall.

Our club took another step forward in May by hosting our second tournament which was called the Bienville Chess Classic. While the first tournament takes its name from the state park we use, this tournament is named for the Bienville National Forest that covers much of Scott County. The idea here is to give as much of a local identity as possible to the events. This tournament was slightly different in that it only included individual games. The team competition will be reserved for the Roosevelt Classic in the fall. We had more than 30 players participate which was significant since we were competing against high school and college graduations for attention during that time of year.

Players came from across Mississippi and one player drove 17 hours from Florida to participate and ended up winning the championship. All the games were very competitive and included some of the best players in Mississippi who went down to thrilling tiebreaker rounds. It was a great experience for everyone involved.

One special feature for the spring tournament is that I named the championship award for Beverly Jo Rhodes. She was a great Forest Library patron and former gifted teacher at Forest High School who taught chess to many students during her time. Ms. Beverly will forever be part of our program through the memorial award given to the first-place winner in the Open section of the Bienville Tournament.

I am already preparing for the second annual Roosevelt Chess Classic set for Nov. 5. Within a week I already have my first registration for a player. I also have several businesses who have already said they will support us again this year.

On Nov. 19 and May 26, I was a guest on “Good Things” with Rebecca Turner. She hosts the show on the statewide radio network of SuperTalk Mississippi. I talked about the game its growth in Mississippi and our club. Our partnership with the library was noted multiple times and credited with our success. I have been invited back for future guest appearances.

I have many other things planned for the latter half of 2022 including having a booth at the Wing Dang Doodle Festival and hopefully the festival in Sebastopol if there is one still held there. I plan to host a merit badge workshop for Boy Scouts across Central Mississippi to come to Forest and earn their chess merit badge. That’s right, the BSA offers a merit badge for chess, and I have also received certification as a merit badge counselor to help facilitate this effort.

We have much more planned, and I welcome and encourage everyone in Scott County to come and be a part of a special game that can bring much fulfillment and strengthen many skills in your life – the game of Chess.

Sincerely,

Chris Allen Baker

Founder and Coordinator

BENEFITS of Playing Chess

- ✓ **Improves concentration and memory.**
According to studies done at the University of Memphis, playing chess significantly improves children's visual memory, attention span, and spatial-reasoning ability.
- ✓ **Enhances reading and math skills.**
With its focus on problem solving and move variables, it's not surprising that chess can improve math skills. But numerous studies show that chess improves reading skills as well.
- ✓ **Fosters logic, critical thinking, and *creativity*.**
Chess favors the "if-then" thinker. "If I move here, then my opponent may move here, here, or even here." That's logic and critical thinking in action! Studies also show that chess boosts creativity, most dramatically in one specific area—originality.
- ✓ **Encourages and rewards hard work.**
Chess offers immediate feedback. Lose your focus, lose a piece. Practice and study the strategies, win more games. In chess, you control your destiny.
- ✓ **Promotes brain growth.**
Chess challenges the brain and stimulates the growth of bodies that send out signals from the brain's neuron cells. Communication within the brain improves and becomes faster.
- ✓ **It exercises both sides of the brain.**
A study indicated that when chess players were asked to identify chess positions and geometric shapes, both the left and right hemispheres of the brain became highly active.
- ✓ **Raises your IQ.**
One scientific study has shown that playing chess can raise a person's IQ.
- ✓ **Helps prevent Alzheimer's.**
A study found that people over 75 who engage in chess are less likely to develop dementia than their non-board-game-playing peers.

✓ **Sparks your creativity.**

Playing chess helps unleash originality, since it activates the right side of the brain, the side responsible for creativity.

✓ **Increases problem-solving skills.**

Chess requires fast thinking and problem-solving on the fly because your opponent is constantly changing the parameters.

✓ **Teaches planning and foresight.**

One of the last parts of the brain to develop during adolescence is the area responsible for judgment, planning and self-control. Chess helps this area's development and helps teenagers make better decisions in all areas of life.

✓ **Optimizes memory improvement.**

Playing chess improves your memory, mainly because of the complex rules you must remember, as well as the memory recall needed when trying to avoid previous mistakes or remembering a certain opponent's playing style. Many chess players have exceptional memory performance and recall.

✓ **Improves recovery from stroke or disability.**

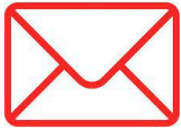
Chess develops fine motor skills in individuals who have disability or have suffered a stroke or other physically debilitating accident. This form of rehabilitation requires the motion of chess pieces in different directions (forward, backward, diagonally forward motion, diagonally backward motion), which can help develop and fine tune a patient's motor skills, while the mental effort required to play the game can improve cognitive and communication skills. Playing can also stimulate deep concentration and calm, helping to center and relax patients who are experiencing different degrees of anxiety.

MOST OF ALL
The #1 Reason to play Chess...
It's
FUN!

Club Scenes



How to find us and keep up between meetings:



Email: scottcountychessclub@gmail.com

Send request here to receive announcements and newsletters.



Facebook: Scott County Chess Club



Twitter: @scott_chess



Phone: 601-507-2772

We meet on the first Saturday of each month from 9 until 11 a.m.
at the Forest Public Library.