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LOCAL NEWS

## Celebration of New England's largest chess club

By Robin Braunstein/ News Correspondent  
Friday, August 22, 2003

Some may have a passion for baseball and for others it might be biking.

Yet for the large crowds that regularly making their way through the doors of the Kennedy Senior Center in Natick, it's the game of chess. Every Tuesday evening, members of the MetroWest Chess Club gather to share their enjoyment of chess while also learning how to improve their skills. Approximately 80 avid chess players arrive from Metrowest and surrounding communities each week.

The MetroWest Chess Club is remarkable for its membership of 120 when many other clubs experience difficulty growing beyond a membership of 15. The Club is now the largest chess club in New England and is also remarkable for its longevity recently celebrating its 20th anniversary.

The anniversary celebration featured a chess simultaneous exhibition by Igor Foygel, who placed 23rd in the 2003 U.S. Chess Open. Foygel played 22 players simultaneously and there was also a speed chess event.

The MetroWest Chess Club was awarded "Club of the Year" for 2002 by the United States Chess Federation.

Originally founded in 1983 as the Framingham Chess Club and hosting events at the Legion Hall in Framingham for ten years, the club changed their name to MetroWest Chess Club when it moved to Natick.

Harvey Reed, clerk and marketing director for the club, attributes much of the club's growth to current President, Mark Kaprielian, who has been involved with the club since its inception.

"Mark is the soul of the club and the central reason why the club has stabilized and grown," Reed said.

Kaprielian was one of a handful of people to show up when the club was being formed in 1983. An active member, Kaprielian took a hiatus when his life became

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Igor Foygel plays one of 20 players Tuesday night at the MetroWest Chess Club's 20th anniversary at Kennedy Senior Center. Foygel placed 23rd in the 2003 U.S. Chess Open. (Staff photo by Bill Thompson)

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too busy to allow time for chess. Ready to become an active member once more, Kaprielian was asked to become president in 1994 and has headed the organization since. TAB

While Kaprielian is uncomfortable being called the "soul of the club," he acknowledged that the club has a special atmosphere he has worked hard to grow as president.

"Maybe I'm the soul of the club because I spend a lot of time fostering the right kind of outlook and attitude. I've tried to preserve a friendly place for people to improve, and make it a place where people want to go," he said.

Kaprielian attributes the success to the club's consistency in all aspects of operation, the inviting location and the level of communication as demonstrated by the club's Website.

The world of chess, the traditional board game and correspondence (done through the mail), has radically changed with the onset of the creation of the Internet .

"The Internet has so many people playing, and now they want to play somebody," Reed said.

The membership of the local club is primarily male ranging in age from 4 to 80. Father and son combinations are growing. Unfortunately, female players tend to abandon the game around age 13 according to Kaprielian.

Marielle Murphy of Brookline, can relate to the intimidation women feel upon entering a primarily male club, but she encourages them to give it a try.

"You don't have to be a man to play, and if you like chess, you'll be welcomed," she said.

Murphy has been a member of the club since January and has enjoyed membership so much she hasn't missed a Tuesday. She is learning to be a tournament director and has been elected to the Board of Directors.

Murphy came to the club after playing chess on the Internet, logging over 10,000 games, but longing to play opponents face-to-face.

"At the end of the game we encourage players to invite their opponent to review the game and get to know your opponent," Kaprielian said explaining that the club has a social atmosphere as well.

The MetroWest Chess Club offers group lessons every Tuesday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. followed by a tournament game. The club plays rated chess following Massachusetts Chess Association rules, and keeps the club Website up to date with player standings and upsets. The club also runs a summer program on Thursdays geared for beginner kids currently involving 45 children.

As an added bonus, the club is beneficial to the Senior Center itself. The club turns their entry fees into goods for the Senior Center helping improve the facilities for all to enjoy. Seniors have the same rights as members of the club.

The club has 120 members and the number grows weekly, thanks to walk-in's who are almost all Internet players.

Players do have to be an USCF member. Walk-ins are always welcome. For more information, visit [www.metrowestchess.org](http://www.metrowestchess.org).

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