

## MINGLING IN THE NE VALLEY

# Cystic Fibrosis fund-raiser knows when to hold'em

Most charities avoid hosting gala events during the summer. And rarely do first-time gatherings try to rouse folks out of their homes in the heat.

But the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation was betting it could make its inaugural event a success.



**KATHY SHAYNA SHOCKET**

Jeff Geller, a State Mortgage broker in Scottsdale, was seeking a unique way to help CFF raise money.

He took a cue from television — Texas hold'em, which is frequently shown on ESPN, Bravo and the Travel Channel.

"This year I had a great time playing Texas hold'em in the tournament to raise money for a children's playground for the Jewish Community Center organized by my friend Steven Schwarz," he said. "And Texas hold'em is so hot now. It seems every time I turn on ESPN there's more poker than baseball."

Jeff's grass-roots efforts paid off, and last week at Barcelona about 100 spectators at \$20 per person turned out to watch the 100 players who paid \$150 each.

The key to the event's success? Along with the impressive prizes and auction items



Photos courtesy of Cystic Fibrosis Foundation

The Cystic Fibrosis fund-raiser at Barcelona drew (at table, from left) Shane O'Grady, Roz Cimbura and Keith Mishkin, (seated behind) Andrew Beliveau and Gina Cameron and (standing in rear, from left) Dr. Michael Breus, Steven Schwarz and Steve Anthony.



Raffle ticket saleswoman Saranne Lund hobnobs with Geller.

that he rounded up, he invited key players in the corporate community. Roy Meshel of State Mortgage, Schwarz, of Via West Properties, Jeff and



Ron Wittenberg (left) shows his winnings with host Jeff Geller.

place.

For fifth place, Keith won a DVD player, brunch at the Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort and Spa and three days at a hotel of his choice in Las Vegas.

"I prefer playing hold'em because there are community cards and there's a lot more strategy," Mishkin said.

Unlike classic poker, in addition to the two cards dealt to each player, there are five community cards in hold'em that each player can see.

Texas hold'em was brought to Las Vegas by a group of Texas gamblers in the 1900s. The TV poker shows launched around 2000 (with

the extremely small lipslick cameras showing the poker players' hand to the audience) and have widely influenced its popularity, especially as a spectator sport, in the past 10 years.

In movies such as *Rounders* in 1998, starring Matt Damon and Edward Norton, Texas hold'em was prominently featured.

Schwarz says this year's inaugural JCC's Texas hold'em fund-raiser of 125 players was so popular that a second

is being planned. And will there be a sequel to the CFF hold'em fund-raiser?

"Definitely," Geller said. "But next time, instead of doing it as a committee of one — me — I'm going to get my buddies from the Boys & Girls and 20/30 clubs to help plan."

If you have a feature social or celebrity item, contact Kathy Shayna Shocket at [kathy.shocket@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:kathy.shocket@arizonarepublic.com)

Lisa Raben of Royal Motors, Mike Porter and Kelly Griffin of Woodbridge Custom Homes and Keith Mishkin of Cambridge Properties were sponsors.

(They are some of the guys Geller plays cards with in the climate-controlled eight-car garage of Jeff and Lisa Raben's Scottsdale home.)

Ron Wittenberg won the grand prize, a 42-inch Pioneer HD plasma TV (donated by Justin Time Audio and Video). Second prize was a Bose home-theater system. Roz Cimbura won a Palm Pilot with GPS navigation for third