

# Game provides bridge to bridge

By Linda Granell

When is bridge not bridge? When it's *aBRIDGEd*.

That's the name of a new game by well-known game inventor and bridge player Maureen Hiron and published by a booming company called Out of the Box. The game is bridge without the bidding, akin to what is known as MiniBridge (a name Hiron considers demeaning) but with a commercial approach that eschews bridge jargon and introduces simplified cards and scoring. There are colors instead of suits and numbers instead of honor cards – an “ace” instead is 14, worth four points.

“There's very little to remember, so you can get the game going immediately,” Hiron says. “The brain strain is gone.” Hiron admits she herself had trouble thinking of herself as a non-bridge player. She naturally began with instructions on how to bid a “game.” Out of the Box representatives said, “Huh?” The game itself is the game, so how can you bid a game? Instead, a game bid is simply “10.” Hiron is in Chicago promoting the game with Matt Mariani, marketing director for Out of the Box, which produced Apples to Apples, the No. 1 game of 2005.

“When Maureen first came to us with this game, I said, ‘We have to do this,’” he says.

“My grandmother has been begging me to learn bridge for 15 years, but the barrier to entry is too high. Maureen has found a way to lower the barrier, providing a solid foundation for playing bridge in the future.” Out of the Box introduced the game at Origins, a national game convention. The company hosted a bridge night in a room with space for 80 players and had to turn some away.

“I had no idea it would be so successful until Origins,” Mariani says. Mariani's 92-year-old grandmother lives in the Chicago area and will visit the tournament.

“She's so proud of me. We're bringing bridge back!” Players can purchase *aBRIDGEd* at the booth in the Riverside Center. The game has been endorsed by the World Bridge Federation and the ACBL.

**Maureen Hiron**