

ChessFest News



Renowned Chess Educator Featured in Award-Winning Film Will Speak at UT Dallas on Feb. 26

Elizabeth Spiegel, a renowned chess educator and subject of an award-winning documentary about an impoverished, inner-city middle school that won notoriety when it became the first middle school team to win the United States Chess Federation (US Chess)'s national high school championship, will speak at The University of Texas at Dallas in February. Spiegel, who coaches the distinguished team, was chosen as the 2019 recipient of the UT Dallas Chess Educator of the Year and will be the featured speaker at this year's annual ChessFest awards ceremony, which will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 26.

Spiegel will speak on the topic: "Best Practices for Parents: How to Help Your Child Succeed at Chess and How to Use Chess to Teach Life Lessons." She will talk about how kids can improve their game— what to spend time on, how to study openings and what to look for in a teacher—as well as why chess is an effective teaching tool and how to support a child who is nervous or went through a terrible tournament.

Spiegel is featured in the 2012 film *Brooklyn Castle*, which follows five of the stellar chess players she coached from I.S. 318, a below-the-poverty-line middle school in Brooklyn that has won more national championships in chess than any other middle schools in the country. The school has won many national junior high championships during the last 18 years, as well as two national elementary championships, but it was its victory in 2012 when it became the only middle school to win the National High School Championship that landed it on the front pages of the *New York Times*, *The Economist*, NBC's *Today Show* and *The Rachel Maddow Show*.

Spiegel learned to play chess from her father, but she didn't start playing seriously until she joined a chess club in middle school in North Carolina. She began teaching chess part time at I.S. 318 in 1999, but the program grew quickly and she began working full time in 2007. She earned her bachelor's degree in English at Columbia and a master's degree in English Education from City College of New York.

Spiegel, who won the Best Game Award over Woman Grandmaster Camilla Baginskaite in the 2007 U.S. Women's Championship, is a Woman FIDE Master and a US Chess expert.



USCF expert chess coach Elizabeth Spiegel will speak at the annual ChessFest Awards ceremony on Feb. 26.

The awards ceremony is an integral part of ChessFest, a celebration of chess organized by the renowned [UT Dallas Chess Program](#) and the [Eugene McDermott Library](#). A reception with refreshments will be held at 6:15 p.m. in the McDermott Suite in the library on Feb. 26. The awards ceremony and talk will be held from 7 to 8 p.m. **To attend, please RSVP with Jim Stallings at james.stallings@utdallas.edu.**

McDermott Library to Host "Blindfold Chess" Feb. 27

Can you play chess well? How about blindfolded? As part of ChessFest 2019, UT Dallas students will have a chance to go against some of the best chess players in the world. This year, Grandmasters Anton Kovalyov and Razvan Preotu, both from Canada, will be playing games of giant chess in the Eugene McDermott Library lobby from noon to 2 p.m. on Feb. 27. During the games, the Grandmasters will either sit with their backs to the board or be blindfolded, making it impossible to see the position of the pieces or touch them. This event is free to the public. **For more information: Jim Stallings, 972-883-4899, or Jill McDermott, 972-883-4951.**

