

Military Bowling ROLLS into Vegas



Military bowling program managers from each service will be rolling into Las Vegas for the Bowling Proprietors' Association of America (BPAA) International Bowl Expo 2010, June 27 to July 1, at the Las Vegas Hilton and Las Vegas Convention Center. Keynote speaker Sarah Palin will speak during the general session on the morning of June 30 at the Las Vegas Hilton.

Bowl Expo offers bowling operators the opportunity to share with and learn from their peers about successful practices and popular trends, as well as get a first-hand look at the latest bowling equipment, products and services from the industry's best companies.

The Armed Forces Bowling Conference (AFBC), which is held in conjunction with Bowl Expo, brings approximately 120 military bowling managers together to meet by service, to network and share ideas among peers and check out the latest equipment and products on the trade show floor.

The following is a look at the current state of military bowling and what is planned for Bowl Expo for each service that will be in attendance.

ARMY

The U.S. Army currently operates 83 bowling centers with 1,610 lanes, and patrons bowled approximately 7.1

million lines (games) in FY09, according to Army Bowling Program Manager Wanda Arthur.

"The overall program, including Category B and C bowling centers, is performing very well with \$27.3 million in net revenue and \$4.3 million or 16 percent net income before depreciation (NIBD) year-to-date," says Arthur. The Installation Management Command (IMCOM) standard for bowling centers is 15 percent.

Army bowling launched a program to provide programming for garrisons to coach youth bowling, children 18 and under, beginning in FY09 and continuing into FY10. "Partnerships between Child, Youth and School Services (CYSS) and garrison bowling centers provided a multitude of new programs that brought thousands of children in to try bowling," notes Arthur. Bowlopolis, a Bowling Proprietors' Association of America (BPAA) promotion targeting children 12 and under, was incorporated into the program. To support the youth training effort, turnkey training kits including lessons manuals were sent to participating garrisons.

To refresh the program in FY10, Bowlopolis kits containing retail merchandise to enhance and stimulate summer youth lessons, leagues, camps, parties, and Bowlopolis in general were sent to participating garrisons. Currently 38 centers

participate in the program and managers submit quarterly after-action-reports to measure the return-on-investment.

In terms of new construction, a new state-of-the-art 16-lane bowling and family entertainment center opened at USAG Wiesbaden, Germany, on April 29th, 2010. The two-story facility provides party and meeting rooms, recreation machines, Strike Zone snack bar, and an expansive sound and light system for glow bowling. A project validation assessment was completed for a new 12-lane bowling and family entertainment center at Ansbach, Germany.

AIR FORCE

Although bowling lineage has seen a decline over the past few years, bowling

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Armed Forces Bowling/Bowl Expo

center Food & Beverage services continue on an upswing, according to Don Freund, Air Force Bowling functional manager. "Overall, our operational revenue is down but our net income is up and is the best since 2005. The Air Force is doing a better job of managing expenses. To ensure we do a better job with programming, in the future, we need to be more aware of our customers' wants and needs by focusing on our core business, bowling, with program emphasis on both recreation and sports."

One program having success for the Air Force is "Hook Up 2 Bowling" (HU2B), which continues to see an increase, and has actually more than doubled its results since its inception. HU2B is a Learn to Bowl program available for all age groups and is taught by a certified United States Bowling Congress coach. Its primary purpose is to teach the basics of bowling over a four- to six-week period and at the conclusion provide all participants with their own equipment (bowling ball and bag).

"This is a fantastic opportunity to get involved in a 'Lifetime Sport,' at a minimal expense. For the bowling centers, it ensures player development for the future," says Freund. "Bowl Expo is the one time a year to take advantage of education while taking in the latest and greatest in products, technologies and industry trends. It also brings all the industry managers and proprietors together for an opportunity to discover what makes each other successful."

This year's Air Force meeting will include such items as an Air Force Services Agency update, bowling industry update, four generations, MAJCOM breakout and leadership motivation.

"We are focused on providing improved education opportunities for our managers, reevaluating how we approach our operations programming and becoming more in tune with our customers' wants and needs," notes Freund.

NAVY

Navy bowling saw gross and net revenues improve over the prior year, according to Ron Hodgen, Bowling/Marina/Bingo program manager, Commander, Naval Installation Command (CNIC).

Although the Navy bowling program is maintaining bowling centers, Hodgen says that training is crucial to having a



The newly renovated Bonnyman Bowling Center at MCB Camp Lejeune.

successful program.

"The seminars put in place for Bowl Expo will be taken 'on the road' after Bowl Expo and extended into each region," notes Hodgen. "The hope is to make 'road trip training' a biennial occurrence to ensure every manager and facility is given the tools necessary to operate successfully. Success should not be a location-driven occurrence."

He points out that one continual challenge is the inability to send many of the Navy's bowling program managers to this important annual conference.

"We have relied on our league secretaries to be responsible for the development of league play and we have taken our foot off new bowler development. Without the skills to develop new bowlers, new programs, some areas have allowed their program to float on the abilities of volunteers," he points out. "We cannot base our operating model on reliance on continually reducing operating costs, constantly looking for new or increased sources of APF. We have to equip our managers with the tools necessary to operate at a level that generates demand. We cannot fail to train and expect a healthy program. We are making the need to provide centers that create usage and attract recurring usage as a focal point of our program."

Although there are no new bowling centers planned, there are several renovation and upgrade projects currently

underway and planned for the future.

MARINE CORPS

Overall, the current state of the bowling centers is good, according to Dave Overbagh, Recreation Business Specialist, Personal and Family Readiness Division.

"Although there has been some decline in bowling sales, it has been made up in retail and food & beverage sales," notes Overbagh.

In the area of new programs, Marine Corps centers were provided Bowlpolis kits from BPAA for their use, which have been very popular. "Youth bowling has been particularly successful," notes Overbagh. "Glow bowling continues to be successful, and lunchtime packages that include a single price for lunch, bowling, and shoes have been successful."

He notes that the Marine Corps has a continuing challenge with troop deployments. "We adjust staffing and programs to meet the demand," says Overbagh. "We also try to provide programs for the families of the deployed Marines. Going forward, one of our challenges will be the continued renovation and upgrading of the bowling centers. Most of the bowling center structures are old and will need considerable upkeep to maintain and improve them."

Overbagh considers attendance at the Armed Forces Bowling Conference and Bowl Expo to be very important.

"It is the opportunity to keep current with the industry," he points out. "Our managers learn the latest trends, new tips, and then take what they have learned back and apply them at their centers. We have a population or mostly 18 to 24 year olds. We have to learn what they want, how they want it, and when they want it."

The Marine Corps breakout session will concentrate on master planning for its facilities. "This is part of an overall MCCS effort to improve our facilities, and will include locating the centers in the right location to serve the base population and providing the right size facility to serve the population needs," says Overbagh.

In the area of new facilities, the Bonnyman Bowling Center (see photo) at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., underwent a major renovation, including lanes, equipment, pro shop, game room and overall appearance.

—GRF



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