

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

Robin Ehrensberger – Strike, Spares & Spirits

by Yvonne Bennett



In early January I spent some time with Robin at Strikes, Spares & Spirits. What a delightful afternoon it was! If you are like me, you probably need to pull out your map of Wisconsin to locate Iron Ridge. The small village of just over 900 people is located in Dodge County and part of BCAW's District 6. It was attending my first district meeting in Watertown that I met proprietor Robin Ehrensberger. What stood up the most about our first meeting was that as the owner of a four lane center, she is engaged and active in the district to include serving on their board.

Robin is the fourth owner of the bar and bowling center located where else but on Main Street. The two story building is over 100 years old and houses not only her business, but also three apartments. During my visit I learned that originally there were two bowling lanes in the basement of the building. Since that time, those lanes were removed and the four "new" lanes were installed adjacent to the bar.

Over the nearly ten years of ownership, she has learned a lot about the history of her bar and bowl from the locals. Many of the farmers in the area stop in for lunch and tell stories of setting pins not so long ago. The prior owner bought equipment from a closed center near Madison and installed automated pinsetters "about 25 or 30 years ago." All I could think was "WOW, I would have loved to have seen that back in the 70's!"

Perhaps the most amazing story told is how Robin came to be a bar, bowling center owner. Having worked for a factory for 18 years, she had a successful career, starting out on the factory floor and eventually working

her way up to becoming a cost accountant. But with success, she did not find happiness. So one day she just "had enough" and decided to become her own boss and buy a business.

I think many of us who grew up in bowling have dreamed of owning our own bowling center. What makes Robin different is the fact that she was not a bowler. She knew very little about the game, but there was an opportunity to buy this building with the bar, bowling center and apartments . . . so that is what she did.

Perhaps even more impressive is that as a single woman, she is doing it largely without the help of family members. No spouse, no children, just Robin. To be fair, her dad Bob does help around the place; I had the pleasure of meeting him during my visit. That said, she truly is chief cook, bottle washer, bartender and pinchaser/mechanic. She even finds a way to work league bowling in while tending bar and flipping burgers. Today, almost ten years later, she is happy and enjoying ownership of this thriving business in a small rural community.

As you might expect, with just four lanes, she has to structure her leagues in such a manner as to provide opportunity for teams to schedule matches. Some schedule over a couple of different days during the week, while her men's league schedules in back-to-back shifts on the same evening. Some of her leagues are USBC certified, particularly those with bowlers who participate in other USBC certified events like the state tournament.



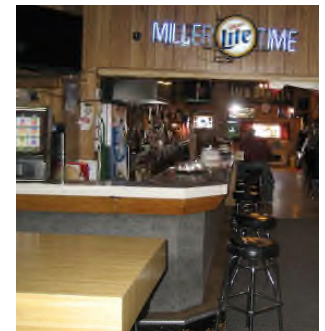
As a member of BCAW, Robin supports and participates in the programs offered in District 6. The "Champ of Champs" Tournament brings bowlers from other centers from around the district. She attends all of the district meetings and in 2009, hosted the district-wide "Champ of Champs" event which ran over the weekends for two solid months.

In 2015, Robin expects to get onboard with BPAA's Smart Buy Programs offered through Pepsi and Sysco Foods. Given her volume of business in food and beverage, she should see a nice return for her \$252 investment in membership with BCAW and BPAA.

Looking forward, she hopes to grow her Friday afternoon youth bowling program from the 17 kids she has today, to perhaps being able to support a middle school program when these youngsters get older. For a previous "non-bowler" I was impressed that she's learned enough about the game to be able to offer tips to help the kids improve.

In addition to the bar and lanes; Strikes, Spares & Spirits is active in the community participating in the annual summer "Monster Croquet" event. Visualize playing croquet with bowling balls and sledge hammers! Local residents enjoy the outdoor bier garden Robin added a couple of years ago, as well as the three horseshoe pits.

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View of the bar from the lanes



High School Bowling Club State Championships March 6-8, 2015

Bowl-A-Vard Lanes (Boys), Prairie Lanes (Girls) Madison, WI

Number of teams and singles invited to the state championships. (Revised 1/20/15)

	BOYS TEAMS <u>D1/D2</u>	BOYS SINGLES	GIRLS TEAMS <u>D1/D2</u>	GIRLS SINGLES
DISTRICT #1 MILWAUKEE	6/1	14	3/1	8
DISTRICT #3A RACINE/KENOSHA	3/2	10	2/1	6
DISTRICT #3B ROCK	1/2	6	1/0	2
DISTRICT #4 MADISON	2/2	8	1/1	4
DISTRICT #5 LaCROSSE	1/1	4	0/1	2
DISTRICT #6 WATERTOWN	1/2	6	1/1	4
DISTRICT #7 FOND DU LAC	3/4	14	1/3	8
DISTRICT #8 GREEN BAY	2/2	8	1/2	6
DISTRICT #8A APPLETON	3/2	10	2/1	6
DISTRICT #8B STURGEON BAY	0/1	2	0	0
DISTRICT #9 WAUSAU	1/3	8	1/2	6
CENTRAL WI 9A	0/2	4	0/1	2
DISTRICT #10 EAU CLAIRE	1/1	4	1	2
	<u>24/25</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>14/14</u>	<u>56</u>

TEAMS INVITED: 77
SINGLES INVITED: 154

To visit the high school bowling club website, go to:
www.wihsbowlclub.com



In-School Bowling is still going strong here in Wisconsin. Krista Hildebrand and Bob Maki attended the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Teacher Convention that was held October 10. Besides the schools that were already part of the program, we had 27 NEW schools which were given curriculums, and hoping to teach this year. Bob also attended the Wisconsin Health & Physical Education (WHPE) Convention held in WI Dells in October 30th & 31st. He talked to and gave out CD's/ DVD's to over 70 new contacts. We are working on finding ISB equipment for schools in the towns we listed on the insert in this newsletter. Please check the list, so your center can add to or be part of the best education program and avenue for creating new bowlers in you center!

Member Spotlight

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I hope that other smaller centers in Wisconsin are reading this and learning how to improve their bottom line. Like larger bowling centers, in today's economic climate it is critical to understand your customers and to meet their needs. Sometimes it isn't just about the bowling, but also all of the other things you can do to bring in revenue.

Jackpot Winner



Tommy Heiberg from Pla-Mor Lanes in Chilton hit the District 7 Jackpot for \$1,191 in November 2014.