

## CLOSER LOOK

# USBC COACHING REQUIRES BACKGROUND SCREENING

**BACK IN 2006**, USBC teamed with the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI) to implement a background screening program for volunteers that would help provide a safe environment for USBC members. USBC now has more than 10,000 volunteers approved through the Registered Volunteer Program (RVP).

This fall, coaches seeking certification at any level through

USBC will also have to be approved through RVP, the USBC Coaching Certification and Development team recently announced. Current coaches will need to be approved through RVP as part of their

continuing education process.

"Making RVP a part of the coaching certification process benefits everyone," said Neil Stremmel, USBC Managing Director, National Governing Body (NGB). "Parents and proprietors will know a USBC certified coach has been through the proper background screening. It adds integrity to the game and our coaches."

Stremmel pointed to the fact the United States Olympic Committee, which launched its SafeSport program earlier this year, is encouraging all NGBs to put programs into place that ensure athletes have safe training environments.

The new guidelines take effect Aug. 1, 2012, so new coaching candidates and

those upgrading their level of certification (Level I to Bronze, Bronze to Silver, etc.) will have to be approved through RVP prior to becoming certified. Current USBC certified coaches will need to become RVP approved by the end of their continuing education period to remain active. Coaches will earn two Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for going through RVP.

Go to [BOWL.com/coaching](http://BOWL.com/coaching) for information on coaching certification and to [BOWL.com/rvp](http://BOWL.com/rvp) to learn more about the Registered Volunteer Program.



## RVP Questions

**What is RVP?** The Registered Volunteer Program is a background screening program implemented to help provide a safe environment for USBC members. It includes a mandatory criminal background screening by the National Center for Safety Initiatives (NCSI) designed to better protect vulnerable populations.

**Do I have to go through RVP each year?** No, RVP approval is good for two years.

**Is there any cost?** The base price is \$21.25 for the two-year period, except in the areas where the government agency for that county may require additional fees for the background screening.

**Do only youth coaches have to be RVP approved?** No, RVP approval will be required for all USBC certified coaches.



LEAGUE BOWLING

# BOOSTING LEAGUE NUMBERS

**DURING THE SUMMER**, associations and bowling centers turn their attention to the important fall league season, looking for ways to bring in new bowlers and making sure last year's teams come back. We asked four USBC Board members – two are proprietors, two are managers of large associations – to share their ideas for keeping and attracting league bowlers.

Proprietors Cathy DeSocio (president of JOMA Company, which operates seven centers) and Frank Wilkinson (Rab's Country Lanes, Staten Island, N.Y.), and association managers Jo Dimond (Central Ohio USBC) and Mark Martin (Metro Detroit USBC) discussed issues relating to keeping and attracting league bowlers.

**What do you see as the key factors in keeping current league bowlers returning for next season?**

**Cathy:** Treat the bowlers as valued customers. We offer incentives to practice and we contact them early and often during the summer. The key for us is to stay in contact with them and listen to any concerns they have. We can't solve all the problems, but we do try to listen.

**Jo:** League bowlers will return if they had a good

experience. Not awards, not prize money – but because of the friendships they have made. New league bowlers need special attention, not

only from league officials but also other league members. Do not assume everyone knows the etiquette of the game or the particulars of

that league.

**Mark:** Bowlers return to leagues that are well run. If issues occur during the





season, it is critical that league officers and the league board deal correctly with such issues. The other key factor for bowlers returning is fun. Bowlers must enjoy their experience.

### Why do league bowlers decide to leave the sport?

**Frank:** The bulk of our customers have told us the reason they didn't come back was because they did not have a good time. We pride ourselves in making sure we put bowlers into a spot where they will fit best. Just because we have a spot in a league

does not mean it is the best fit for a bowler, whether they are new or not.

**Jo:** We are really going to work on our "Welcome to Bowling" coaching events this year. We lose so many of our new members, I think, because we tend to forget about them. We had a program this past year to recognize all first-year members with a free team entry for our city tournament and "official" CO-USBC pin. One of our goals this year is to expand this by more personal contacts with our new members.

**Mark:** Bowlers leave the sport because it no longer is enjoyable. This can be addressed by league officers to make sure the league is operated fairly. The other main reason is the length of the season. This comes up frequently when talking to bowlers.

### Do you have examples of programs or initiatives that have worked for retaining league bowlers?

**Frank:** A few seasons back we introduced our "Bring a Friend" promotion. Our surveys showed eight of 10 people who join a league were asked by friends or family members. When someone brings in a new bowler to their league, we reward the existing bowler, and the new bowler receives a welcome letter along with a center "Rewards Card" that is pre-loaded with \$25 for use during open play. Incentives are paid after the first six weeks of league play to ensure the new bowler stays with the league. This is a center-based program, but leagues can initiate such an incentive program by adopting it within their budget a small allocation to incentivize new

league bowlers. It can be small tokens of appreciation – gift cards, USBC membership fees paid, etc. Small incentives and a "Thank you" go a long way.

**Cathy:** League Bowler cards that have discounts and specials in the center, special pricing for league bowlers only. Also, we have end-of-season tournaments and private lessons with our resident pro, Rick Steelsmith.

### What methods have you found to be successful to get non-league bowlers to take that step to joining a league?

**Mark:** Invite them. Nearly every league bowler became a league bowler because somebody invited them, whether it was a co-worker, family member or friend.

**Cathy:** We try to tailor a new league to speak to the interests of a specific group, create a reason for them to join. We also try to group new bowlers with others that are at their same skill level.

Lastly, we use a common thread to draw a group together – neighborhood leagues, hospital leagues, golfer leagues, family leagues.

**Frank:** The most successful marketing is peer-to-peer. Direct mail is still a very successful part of our marketing plan. Providing small discounts to get the bowlers in, and then it is our job to expose them to everything we do and provide.

### What steps or initiatives have you successfully used to get the casual bowler to join a league?

**Frank:** TALK, TALK, TALK! Engage these customers by simply sitting with them and asking them questions to

understand why they keep coming back to enjoy our great sport. Many of our "casual" customers are committed league bowlers; they just don't know it. They come in every week at the same time and compete against each other. So when we recognize such groups, we take the time to go and talk with them.

**Jo:** Fear of commitment seems to be one of the reasons non-league bowlers don't want to join a league, so I try to steer them toward a short-season league or other type of format. Placing bowlers with the right group is key – that from someone who managed to put two ex-wives on the same team one year.

**Cathy:** We ask them to join. We offer leagues that combine lessons and then competition. We use a program we call Average Tracker that is just for frequent open-play bowlers. They sign up, turn in their scores and we keep their average for them. It gives the counter personnel an "in" to talk to them about joining a league, based on how often they come in and what they are averaging. A common reason non-league bowlers give for not joining a league is, "I am not good enough." With Average Tracker, we can show them they can join and be competitive.

**Mark:** Casual bowlers will join a league if they don't think it is a league. Again, keep it fair for all and most of all FUN. Bowlers will seek their own level, but they must join first. The leagues that casual bowlers would join would be short season (eight weeks or less) and if they take a liking to it, they will join other leagues.



# USBC QUICK STRIKES

NEWS AND NOTES FROM THE UNITED STATES BOWLING CONGRESS

## Wheelchair bowler rolls perfect game

Shawn Beam, though confined to a wheelchair, took up the sport of bowling nearly 22 years ago. On May 18, the Burleson, Texas, resident put together 12 consecutive strikes for a 300 game in his TGIF league at Cityview Lanes in Fort Worth.

The American Wheelchair Bowling Association (AWBA) reports Beam, 36, is the first freehand wheelchair bowler to shoot a certified perfect game. USBC has certified the score as official.

"There are not a lot of sports for people in wheelchairs where you can feel like you can compete on the same playing field as everyone else, and that has always been the big draw for me," said Beam, a mailroom supervisor for American Airlines who maintains a 190 league average. "I've never let my chair keep me from doing what I want to do. Wheelchair basketball guys will never be in the NBA, but you can compete with anyone in bowling."



## Detroit area to host youth events in 2013

The Detroit area will play host to the North Pointe Junior Gold Championships and the USBC Youth Open Championships in 2013.

The North Pointe Junior Gold Championships will take place at Sunnybrook Lanes and Sterling Lanes, both in Sterling Heights, Mich., and AMF Rose Bowl in Roseville, Mich., from July 13-19,

2013. All three sites will host qualifying rounds with match-play rounds taking place at Sunnybrook Lanes, which will serve as the host center.

Sterling Lanes will be the site for the USBC Youth Open Championships, scheduled for July 11-28, 2013. The Detroit area last played host to the events in 2008.

## USA Bowling to offer coaching seminars

The USA Bowling Coaching program has scheduled more than 50 free coaching seminars throughout the country this fall. The seminars are designed to provide the skills necessary to teach the fundamentals of bowling.

The three-hour seminars include on-lane and classroom instruction, and are perfect for bowling novices such as parents/guardians, youth directors – anyone who wants to learn more about how to teach kids to bowl. Every attendee will be provided a USA Bowling Coaching manual created by USBC Coaching and an eight-week lesson plan guide.

Go to [BOWL.com/usabowlingcoaching](http://BOWL.com/usabowlingcoaching) for dates, locations and to register.

## CALENDAR

**Now-July 9**  
**USBC Open Championships**  
Baton Rouge, La.

**Now-July 8**  
**USBC Women's Championships**  
Reno, Nev.

**July 9-10**  
**USBC Senior Championships**  
Reno, Nev.

**July 14-20**  
**North Pointe Junior Gold Championships**  
Indianapolis

**July 12-14, 19-23, 27-28**  
**USBC Youth Open Championships**  
Indianapolis

**August 20-25**  
**Pan American Bowling Confederation Championships**  
Las Vegas

**Oct. 19-23**  
**USBC Senior Queens**  
Arlington, Texas

Complete information on [BOWL.com/tournaments](http://BOWL.com/tournaments)

## New USBC Youth jersey is unveiled

USBC Youth members helped decide the style of jersey they will sport on the lanes for the 2012-13 season. The latest USBC Youth jersey, one of the benefits for USBC Youth Standard members, is being sent to youth bowlers who purchased their membership through leagues that began after March 15, 2012.

Before determining the design for the third version of the popular jersey, USBC Youth members were sent a survey that featured several design options. Voters overwhelmingly selected the design that is predominately black and white, with red highlighting the USBC Youth "star" logo on the athletic jersey.

