

Bowling is one way to strike up activity at any age

**“Moving Grays Harbor”
By Maryann Welch**

You know, activity doesn't always have to be about maintaining an elevated heart rate or struggling to complete that last repetition of bicep curls. Sure those things have their place, but what about the other hours in the day when the same old routine is getting old, there is nothing on television and o-dark-thirty comes too early? The housework can wait...it's time to enjoy an activity that will truly reenergize everyone from children to seniors. I'm talking about bowling.

Bowling is an activity that has been around for many years and has been equally accessible in all areas of the Harbor yet we tend to take it for granted. I admit, I rarely think about going bowling myself, but when a coworker told me that she had taken her kids bowling a few times in the last two months it got me to thinking about another great option for moving, being with people you love, and just having fun. When my own children were younger we occasionally enjoyed this family outing that meant spending some quality time together. There was no waiting for someone to catch up (as in cycling and walking) and we all had some good laughs – suffice it to say that I am elated when I break 100!

Much earlier in my life I belonged to a bowling league with a bunch of women friends. What a fun way that was to spend time together. We were active, laughing and reaping the benefits

of those outings without fully appreciating it at the time. Many studies have recently showed that laughing and developing friendships are good for maintaining a healthy life. Aside from that you are repetitively lifting a ball (requiring some muscular involvement) and are racking up a few extra steps with each frame you bowl.

Another thing that spurred me to write this particular article was a feature in the Daily World a few months ago about bowler Rosie Foshaug who has not missed her weekly outing for over 47 years! The article stated that Rosie took up bowling in the mid-1950's and she's been at it ever since. There are not many sports that allow you that kind of longevity.

In talking with Mark Studer at Montesano lanes (next to Thriftway in Montesano), he is happy to report that industry-wide bowling seems to be gaining in popularity. He shares that in some of the larger cities bowling is viewed as a great activity for kids after school – their parents know that they are not on the streets causing or avoiding trouble and that they are active. He also states that industry trends seem to take a bit longer to reach the Harbor, but, he has definitely noticed an increase in “open bowlers” (bowlers that are not affiliated with a team) over the last year. Those bowlers range in age from toddlers up to seniors. Mark says he's even had an 80 year-old take up bowling recently –that just goes to show you that it is never too late to start being active.

Rob Shaver at Ocean Shores Bowl echoes Mark's observations. He states that he too has seen an increase in activity at his lanes over the last year and attributes this to more positive media exposure. He relates that you will see bowling on television commercials and programs as well as

portrayed in the movies more often than it was a few years ago. He recalls a recent senior tournament in which 5 or 6 perfect games were scored – “it’s not every sport that will let you be at the top of your game in your 50’s and 60’s” he comments.

Rob also shares that the industry has had some very innovative ideas as well. He states that “bumper-bowling has been the best industry innovation in the last 15 years”. What family doesn’t love bumpers? This allows even the youngest bowlers to have a measure of success and have something to celebrate. I was introduced to the bumpers at my granddaughter’s 5th birthday party and wondered whether I could use them, too! Another great bowling feature is rock-n-bowl or glow-bowl. This is more geared toward teens and young adults and involves fluorescent lights, loud music and social opportunities!

Bob Edwards of Rainier Lanes in Aberdeen is also optimistic about the increasing popularity of bowling. To help with making bowling more mainstream he has taken advantage of a program offered by the Bowling Proprietors Association. They provide 6 portable lanes, complete with balls and pins that can be used for 2-3 weeks by any elementary school in the county. He indicates that Stevens Elementary School has the lanes now and he will soon transport them to Central Park Elementary School. Along with learning the game, teachers are given pointers on how to include lessons on math, science and history as they introduce the sport to the next generation. Bob also sweetens the pot with providing each student with a coupon for a free round of bowling at Rainier Lanes. He indicates that the service is free and any elementary school is welcome to schedule a time. Either contact your

local bowling alley or Bob at Rainier Lanes to take advantage of this offer.

Bob also provided me with some fodder for great trivia questions...

1. The average 4-step approach in bowling uses 149 muscles.
2. Over the standard 3-game time period, a person lifts an average of 800 pounds.

I think it’s time to get back to using those bowling techniques I first learned in junior high P.E. class along with many of you readers!

Maryann Welch is the director of Grays Harbor County’s Public Health and Social Services Department.

If you have questions about becoming more active or have information about free or low-cost activity in the area, contact the public health department at 532-8665 ext. 483, e-mail us at moving@co.grays-harbor.wa.us or visit our web site at www.ghphss.org.