

Center supporters invade bowling alley

By Tom Vaught

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Once a year, the staff and management of AMF Bradenton Lanes entertain the crew from Anna Maria Island as they bowl to raise money for the AMI Community Center. This year was the 19th for the O'Connor Bowling Challenge, and there was a waiting list of people who wanted to join the fun.

And it was a lot of fun.

It was also profitable for the Center. Business manager Sandy Pruett said that they made around \$10,000 from the event.

People of all ages participated as Community Center Director Pierrette Kelly went around the lanes taking their pictures. Peggi Davenport circulated selling raffle tickets, which held hopes for those who knew their bowling scores would not win them any prizes.

When the last ball had been rolled, the volunteers counted up the scores and, as Kelly said before the awards ceremony, it was apparent that one family had been practicing their bowling over the year since the last challenge.

The venue moved to the Anna Maria Oyster Bar and after some time to down some snacks, the attention turned to George and Billy O'Connor, who dreamed up the idea almost two decades ago. They, along with their wives, Sharon and Sue, Community Center Assistant Executive Director Scott Dell and Kelly started handing out tokens of appreciation and trophies.

Davenport got a bouquet of flowers for her work selling the tickets. Publisher Mike Field won another bouquet for The Sun's sponsorship of the event.

The Fritz family took the best bowling trophies. Bryan won the Chuck Stearns award for the highest game overall with a 231. That game also won him the highest men's game. Just so he wouldn't get too big a head, his wife, Christine, took the top women's game with a 174. Bryan also won high series with a 596 and Christine had the highest women's series with a 481.



SUN PHOTOS/TOM VAUGHT

Clockwise above: George O'Connor, Pierrette Kelly, big screen TV winner Joanie Fossell and Billy O'Connor; George and Billy O'Connor with rod and reel winner Hugh Holmes; Billy O'Connor with Bryan and Christine Fritz, who won several trophies.

On the other side of the scale, Robert Wallace took the men's low game with a 49 and Natalie Maupin won the lowest women's with a 34.

After the last trophies were gone, they started drawing tickets for prizes. There were discounts and meal coupons from area restaurants, fishing trips from boat captains, a rod and reel or two and other items that Island residents would enjoy. The big ticket item, sponsored by The Sun, was a Visio 46-inch flat screen television and Joanie Fossell, of Bradenton, had the winning ticket.



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Above: George and Billy O'Connor present Peggi Davenport with flowers for selling raffle tickets. Left: Bowlers filled the alleys.