
BVL party scores big for Walter Reed bowlers

The bowling lanes at the National Naval Medical Center were the site of the inaugural event of a new series of Bowlers to Veterans Link (BVL) “We Salute You” bowling parties. This first party was for a group of service men and women who traveled the short distance from Walter Reed Army Medical Center to enjoy an afternoon of camaraderie and competition on the lanes.

“Our ‘We Salute You’ parties truly represent what BVL is all about,” explained Darlene Baker, chair of the BVL board of directors. “Our goal is to show the troops we honor their sacrifices for our country; and our approach here is to utilize bowling as a recreation therapy vehicle to create a positive environment featuring fun, physical and mental fitness, and fellowship.”

The bowling party series was created to provide returning service men and women receiving care at both Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Medical Center an opportunity to step away from the often-stressful hospital setting and provide an outlet to have fun.

The home states of the participants in the inaugural event represented a cross-section of our nation—from California to New York; Arkansas to Ohio, and ranged in levels of bowling experience. They fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, stood watch on the USS Enterprise, did tours in Guantanamo Bay, Panama, Pakistan, and Japan.

Regardless of backgrounds, however, participants roundly agreed that the afternoon was “a 300.” One member of the group from Texas said this about the event, “It was wonderful, even though my bowling wasn’t! I’ll be back, though.” Another bowler from Connecticut, who admitted she was hesitant of her abilities prior to the party, noted “I have not been bowling since I was very young, but I did better than I thought I would!” She concluded, “I enjoyed (the activity), though I was unsure before I came. It was a good distraction from everything else going on.”

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A California hero who has served in no less than 11 locales noted this, “[Even though] I bowled in last place ... I enjoyed bowling very much today. The event brought a smile and laughs which I haven’t experienced in quite some time. I’m glad I decided to participate.”

Perhaps the most moving response was from a soldier who hails from Alabama. “Thanks for providing me an opportunity to get out and have some fun. The best part for me was that everything was taken care of—the lane rental, shoes, food, even a goody bag was given out! The lanes were decorated for our party, and it made me feel good that someone thought enough of us to make sure that we had a good time.”

In addition to the afternoon of bowling, all participants were treated to lunch and received gift bags which included T-shirts with the BVL logo and the “Bowling Supports America’s Troops” tagline, playing cards, and an assortment of candies and other treats. The gift pack also included the USBC publication, *The Bowler’s Guide: An instructional and educational guide to bowling*.

BVL needs financial support to continue these events, as well as the host of other programs provided to our nation’s service men and women. Please visit BowlingforVeterans.org to learn more and make your pledge.

Founded in 1942, the Bowlers to Veterans Link is headquartered in Fairfax, Va., and is guided by representatives of the United States Bowling Congress and the Bowling Proprietors’ Association of America.