

Bea Bennie elected to WIBC Hall of Fame

Honored for more than 60 years of service to bowling

Bernice "Bea" Bennie, Forest Heights, Md., is among three individuals selected for the Women's International Bowling Congress Hall of Fame. Bennie is credited for establishing the Washington, D.C. Area and Virginia State Women's Bowling Associations. She is widely recognized for her more than 60 years of service to women's bowling at the local, state, and national levels.

In the 1940s, Bennie's involvement in bowling helped found the Washington, D.C. Area WBA. She is credited with helping to bring tenpin bowling to our nation's capital. In those days, duckpin bowling prevailed in the area. In 1947, Bennie and her husband, former American Bowling Congress president and NCABA Hall of Famer Matthew Bennie, purchased the area's first certified tenpin bowling center in Alexandria. Over the next few years, many of the area's duckpin bowling center owners began to see the popularity of tenpin bowling, and the area boomed with new bowling centers and sanctioned bowlers.

Bennie served bowling at every level, including as a league secretary. In 1953, she accepted a position as secretary of WDCAWBA. During her time as secretary, membership in her association skyrocketed from 278 members to more than 15,000 members in 1963. In 1957, she helped form the Virginia State WBA. Bennie's work in bowling directly resulted in hundreds of thousands of women in Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia becoming members of WIBC.

In 1963, she accepted a position on the WIBC board of directors, which she fulfilled for more than 15 years. In 1979, Bennie was named a WIBC member emerita. At the national level, she also served as director of the American Junior Bowling Congress (now the Young American Bowling Alliance). Regionally, Bennie helped form what is now called the VIR-MAR-DISTRICT YABA. Her local and state accomplishments include positions as a founder, director, and secretary/treasurer of WDCAWBA as well as a founder and vice president of the Virginia State WBA.

Bennie, a member of the WDCAWBA and Virginia State WBA Halls of Fame, joins WIBC immediate past president and life member Joyce Deitch, Las Vegas, and former TEAM USA member and professional bowler Linda Kelly, Dayton, Ohio. All three will be formally inducted next April at the 2003 WIBC Annual Meeting in Reno, Nev. Bennie and Deitch are being inducted for meritorious service and Kelly for superior performance.



Bea and Matt Bennie at their 50th anniversary celebration in 1981. ... At right, Bea opens the Pioneer league at Arcadia Lanes in 1945.



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