

Bowling a lifetime sport for Butte family

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By Keith Meagor

Bowling is a sport that can span a lifetime. People start bowling as young as 5 and bowl well into their golden years. Bowling teaches competition, hand-eye coordination, and patience.

There is also a social aspect to bowling. Friendships are formed between bowlers that span decades. I know that most of my Dad's friends were bowlers and they had been friends for at least 30 years. Bowling can be a young and old sport that is individual, doubles, or team competition. Bowling is a sport that families can participate together.

In this regard we searched for a family that would be a good match to the ideas above. We wanted a family that everyone likes to be around and bowl with. We found such a family.

Meet the Piazzola family. They are a competitive family that bowls together on the Friday Ball and Chain League at Star Lanes. The patriarch of the family is the reliable, right handed Frank Piazzola, who has been bowling since he was 12 years old and started bowling with duck pin (duckpin bowling is a modified form of bowling where the pins are smaller, the ball is smaller and you have three frames to knock all the pins down).

Frank has been bowling since there were people in the back setting pins and you had to keep score by hand. The Piazzola children are Ms. consistent, right hander Carole (McGivern); Silky smooth, left hander Katie; Powerball, right hander Mike; and Dynamic Chuck. Chuck is taking a year off of bowling and was not available to participate in this article.

All of the Piazzola children have all been bowling since they were in grade school. They started after automatic pin setters and were in youth leagues when the automatic scoring was brought into Butte. A common theme from the kids was that "Dad made us get up every Saturday and go to the lanes and that is how we got into bowling."

Even with those early morning memories they all said that they were happy their dad got them into bowling. It is a sport that they can do for most of their lives and allows them to be socially active and spend time with each other. Carole is working on getting her kids interested in bowling for the same reasons.

Although family, weather and work can at times make bowling every week difficult the Piazzola's are there every week. Frank currently bowls two nights a week and is averaging 190 plus each night. Carole, Katie and Mike generally bowl on Friday's with their dad and they average 165, 150, and 156, respectively.

Frank and the kids have been bowling in the Friday night Ball and Chain mixed league for the last eight years, which is when Carole moved back. They have finished second in the league a couple times and are on a run of winning sweepstakes (last night of bowling for the season) the last two years. The last eight years were not the first time the Piazzola's were seen on Fridays, Frank and Chuck and their wives were regulars on Friday nights for several years.

All of the Piazzolas have an accomplished resume for bowling. Aside from their competitiveness in league, Frank bowled a 300 in 2010 and Carole, Katie and Mike were all there to witness and celebrate in this great accomplishment. Frank's highest game prior to that was a 296 in 1973.

While the kids have not reached this accomplishment, their high games are quality games: Mike's highest game is a nice 275, Carole's high game is a great 260 and Katie's high game is stellar 240. As a family they competed in the annual city tournament and finished fourth in team in 2011.

Carole and Katie have also won doubles in back to back years and Katie has won singles in the city tournament. Frank and Carole were also partners at The National Bowling Tournament a few years ago.

All of the highlights on the lanes is a great accomplishment, but when you sit and talk to the Piazzola family you can see that the main reason they bowl is to be with each other. When asked about bowling league with his kids, Franks says that it is a great thing to be able to go out on a night a week and be with my kids and have some fun.

Be able to talk about what happened that week and just be with each other. He believes that the one night a week has brought them together as a family and he really enjoys Friday nights. Frank says if the cell phones were not allowed it would be even better time, which the family is looking at possibly starting a no cell time of Friday during bowling. Frank also indicated that it is nice to play card games with the kids and take some of their money.

Frank also mentioned that it is fun to go to the lanes and talk to friends that he generally only sees at the lanes. "Those friendships," he said, "are special and it is always good to sit and talk to people I have been bowling 30 years with."

When the kids were asked about bowling league with their dad, they all echoed Frank's comments. They also said it was time that they all cherished with each other. When Carole moved back it was a way to get everyone together to spend a night together and have some fun with dad. Katie says she loves to see how competitive her dad is still with bowling and especially when one of the kids is beating him. Mike said that it is a lot of fun to bowl with dad because we are old enough to have quality conversations and harass at each other. Carole also noted that it is a good night and gives her a break from the kids.

I can tell you watching them on Friday's they all harass each other equally and they do have a lot of fun with each other.

On any given Friday you can come to Star Lanes and see the Piazzola family having a great time. They are not only throwing strikes and competing with the rest of the league they are socializing and cherishing time with each other. They have no plans to stop. They want to continue to keep making memories on the lanes.