

# Bowling alley offers games, food, friendship

Connie Grafel, full-time economic development director and fill-in bowling alley manager, grabs the phone as she gets things ready for another night.

She gets the order for a pizza and hands it over to Jeanne Pachner, who is manning the oven this hot Friday.

The phone rings again. Someone wants to know what's on at the Sunflower Cinema.

It's 5 p.m., and while only the volunteer workers have shown up so far, Oberlin's bowling alley is ready to go.

The alley opened in mid-March of 2011 as part of a new senior center and recreation complex. The bowling alley part was built and is run by the Oberlin-Decatur County Economic Development Corp. So far, said Ms. Grafel, the full-time paid director of the agency, things are going OK.

"The Hunt Brothers pizzas have been going really well," Ms. Grafel says, adding that the alley has added onion rings, chicken wings, candy and chips to its menu. Pop, beer and bottled water also are available.

Since this is Friday, she says, there will be "red pin" bowling. If a red pin appears in the head pin, or front, position and the bowler gets a strike, he or she will win a \$10 credit.

That will go a long way, since it only costs \$3 a game to play for adults, \$2 for kids 6 to 12 and \$1 for those under 6. Shoe rental is \$1.

Over the six shiny lanes and digital scoring screens, black lights and a disco ball add some sparkle to night games.

It's summer, so it's open bowling every night. Leagues will resume in August, Ms. Grafel says. Last

**4th of July Special**  
The Sunflower Recreation bowling alley will be open from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. tonight.

year, leagues bowled on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday night with men's, women's and mixed teams. This year, she said, she hopes to get a youth league going also. She is filling in as manager while the regular manager, Doug Huscher, is away on medical leave.

The alley is open from 5 to 10 or 10:30 p.m. Friday through Tuesday unless there is no one there, she said. The alley is closed Wednesday and Thursday.

Ms. Grafel hurries to the locker room to show off the 48 brand new bowling balls bought with a \$2,000 donation from the Bargain Box. When the alley opened more than a year ago, she said, organizer Greg Lohofener, who was the chief force behind getting the recreation center built, drove to a defunct alley near Kansas City and got some old balls. However, there were not many children's sizes.

Now, the alley has all-new urethane glow-in-the-dark balls from 6 to 15 pounds in bright primary colors. Forty lockers are available for rent at \$25 a year for the serious bowler.

But bowling isn't the only activity. Besides a pool table, the alley has held class and family reunions, birthday parties, club meetings and fund raisers for the Sunflower Cinema next door.

A spaghetti dinner and movie, sponsored by the Oberlin Business

Alliance last year, brought in about 60 people to raise money for the theater, Ms. Grafel said, adding that was probably the maximum the facility could comfortably hold.

The cost is \$20 if you bring your own food, she said, but if the facility provides the food, you can have your meeting there for free.

The next big event will probably be a Rolling Stones concert and 1978 interview with Mick Jagger, she said, with food and drink in the bowling alley then the concert and interview in the theater afterwards.

After 16 months in business, she added, the recreation complex is doing fine.

"We're paying all our bills and making our loan payments," she said.

But she noted that the bowling alley runs on volunteer help. At least two people are needed every night, she said.

"We really couldn't do it without all our volunteers," she said. "Kim Solko is our savior. She's here Saturday, Friday and Tuesday."

She added that Susan Nelson and Missy Uehlin also help out a lot.

By 8:30 p.m., the bowlers have arrived and the sound of crashing pins and cheers fills the air. Soon the movie will be out next door, and a few more patrons would come in to bowl, play pool or just enjoy a late supper of pizza and beer.



**READY TO PICK UP A SPARE**, Jessup Ray was out on Saturday bowling with his brother Adric and his "honorary grandpa," Kent Euhus.



**ENJOYING A PIZZA**, John Mike Fordham (above) was more interested in food than bowling Friday. Angus Mauser (upper right) from Ipswich, Mass., who is in town for the wedding of a cousin, Molly Coleman, wanted to bowl. Tyler Bruggeman (lower right) lined up a shot on the pool table.



**Herald story and photos by Cynthia Haynes**