

Bowling Season Teaches the Joy of Positive Recreation

The Woodridge adolescents' bowling season brought surprises and a newfound respect for the game this year. The season commenced at the recent state tournament held in Springfield, IL. Six Woodridge youth made the nearly three-hour trip to compete against over a hundred other participants. They returned with five trophies and respect for a new positive leisure activity.

Qualifying Woodridge adolescents spent their Tuesday afternoons at a local bowling alley learning, practicing, and trying to stay out of the gutters. Special attention was paid to proper technique, body posture, bowling etiquette, and scoring. The youth monitored and adjusted their approaches to increase success on the lanes. Any Woodridge adolescents maintaining consistent behavior and participation in groups qualified for the bowling opportunity.

Some youth had limited experience with the sport. Others said they bowled with their friends and families when they were younger. Then the activity took a backseat to drug use and other high-risk behaviors. During a practice just days before the state tournament, one of the youth rolled a strike and announced it was the first strike of his life. The next frame he bowled the second strike of his life. At the tournament, his score of 130 got him a third place trophy for high game and helped secure a second place trophy for high series. One of the biggest surprises was a client that bowled a 49 the first game, but persisted to improve. His third game's score of 146 won him a second place trophy for high game.

The Illinois Inter-Agency Athletic Association (IIAA) puts on the annual State Bowling Tournament. The IIAA coordinates year-round sports and recreation

experiences for youths in Illinois residential facilities. This year 118 youth from eleven agencies attended the tournament. The goals for any event are sportsmanship, teamwork, discovering new skills, and positive social behavior.

All the participating adolescents agreed the bowling season was beneficial. It affirmed positive recreation could be just as engaging and entertaining as high-risk behaviors. The boys were thrilled when their team won the 2nd place award for the Older Boy's division. The guys showed off their trophies upon returning to the unit. Some youth even expressed interest in bowling with their families during passes. The experience illustrated the benefits of sober leisure activities, and the importance of recreation participation for the youth's recovery.

The next Event for the IIAA and Woodridge adolescents is Track and Field held in the middle of May.