

# Bowling a "youth" movement in Acton

BY IAN SMITH  
NORTH ESQUESING

Bowlers of all ages are certainly welcomed at Acton Lanes, but owners Darlene and Gord Labombard maintain a special interest in the young players that frequent their bowling alleys at 10 Main Street North.

The Labombard's are entering their fifth season of operating Acton Lanes, having owned it for the past two years. Its previous owner, Dave Manes, encouraged the Labombards to operate it for two years to see if they liked it. They obviously do, as Darlene says, "I have the best job in the world." Darlene herself has bowled for 15 years, and is the second woman in Ontario to make the top five in the Provincial finals four or more times. She is also ranked 16th in Canada this year by "Bowling News."

John Wagg, program director of Acton Lanes the past three years, works closely with the Labombards running the Acton Lanes' Youth Bowling Council (YBC) program which commences right after the Labour Day Weekend. John first moved to Acton 21 years ago and worked at the Acton Tannery. The leather factory had a bowling league, and John was encouraged by co-workers to join. He was soon "hooked on bowling" and became involved with YBC.

John has worked with two-time National Champion Kylie Kruk for all nine years

she's been bowling.

"We taught her everything we know," explains John, "and now she's doing it all on her own." Wagg says right from the start it was easy to tell Kylie would be "an outstanding bowler."

To become National Champion the last two years, Kylie had to advance through the YBC's grueling "4 Steps to Stardom" program for young bowlers. First, she had to win an eight game house elimination, then regional playoffs, and finally the provincials before earning a trip to the National Championship.

However, Kylie is not the only exceptional bowler at Acton Lanes. Wagg is also excited about other young bowlers that call Acton Lanes their second home.

"Cora Ridout, Nicole Cutting, Holly Wiscombe and Daniel Newell are just a few of our young bowlers that have the potential to be in the national spotlight next spring."

Gord and Darlene share the opinion that bowling is becoming increasingly popular in Acton and surrounding area. "The numbers are way up compared to five years ago," adds Wagg. Four years ago, approximately 80 young bowlers were involved in the YBC program. Last season, that number reached over 210.

Gord insists that five pin bowling is "tougher than 10

pin because its easier to bowl a perfect game using the big ball." He adds the best part of 5 pin bowling is its participants "can bowl from age three to 103," mainly because the ball is substantially lighter.

Annually, the alleys at Acton Lanes are levelled and refinished. This August, the Labombards also totally re-sanded the alleys to eliminate dents caused by the bowling balls over the years and ensure the balls play "true."

In addition to Acton Lanes' successful youth program, the Labombards are expanding their seniors program for people aged 55 and over. They are also looking forward to hosting a "Special Olympics" for physically and mentally challenged adults and children. This special program will run this fall on Thursday evenings at 6:00 p.m. So far, 24 bowlers have signed up for this new league.

Acton Lanes also features a company challenge league, as well as a new "Smurfs" program every day for children aged two to five, which includes supervision, chips, juice and a cookie.

The Labombards, once Disc Jockeys, have set up a spectacular light show at Acton Lanes to liven up special functions such as birthday parties and corporate occasions. Acton Lanes also boasts an electronic scoring system that is a form of

entertainment in its own right.

The game of Ten Pin Bowling, as we know it, came to North America from English and German settlers. According to Gord, five pin bowling was invented by Tommy Ryan in 1909. The reason behind the change from 10 to 5 pin was that it was easier for business men to play during their lunch hour.

Gord points out that there is evidence of a game very similar to bowling discovered in the tomb of an Egyptian pharaoh. The use of the word "alley," he adds, comes from England where they sometimes played the game between buildings.

Acton has its own rich bowling history. The bowling alley was first installed at its present downtown location by Ed Jennings. He lived on the top floor of the building some 50 years ago, and operated a garage on the bottom floor. Darlene explains that a man approached Jennings in the '50's to rent out the top of the building for the purpose of installing a bowling alley. Ed Jennings apparently liked the idea so much that he opened his own bowling alley.

Since that time, bowling has become a tradition for both young and old in Acton and surrounding communities.



PHOTO BY IAN SMITH

FALL PIN FEVER - Acton Lanes owner Darlene Labombard and Program Director John Wagg are looking forward to the YBC season and its "4 Steps to Stardom" program for young bowlers.



**WANT SOME EXERCISE - A WEEKLY SOCIAL NIGHT OUT AND MOST OF ALL, WANT SOME FUNNN ?!!**

**JOIN A 5-PIN BOWLING LEAGUE**

**WE HAVE MIXED, LADY'S & MEN'S LEAGUES  
ADULT'S, SENIOR'S (PLUS 55) & CHILDREN'S LEAGUES  
SOCIAL, RECREATIONAL OR COMPETITIVE LEAGUES**

**ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR WEEKLY, MONTHLY AND YEARLY AWARDS.  
ALL LEAGUES HAVE YEAR END AWARDS DAYS AND/OR BANQUETS.**

**BECOME A MEMBER OF THE YOUTH BOWLING COUNCIL OF CANADA**

**TO ENSURE THE LEAGUE AND TIME YOU WANT PRE-REGISTER AUGUST 25TH TO SEPTEMBER 6TH  
EITHER BY PHONE OR IN PERSON - YEARLY REGISTRATION FEE IS \$13.00**

**DIVISIONS**

**ALL AGES AS OF DEC. 31ST, 1998  
SMURFS - AGES 2 TO 5  
PEEWEEES - AGES 5 TO 7  
BANTAMS - AGES 7 TO 10  
JUNIORS - AGES 10 TO 14  
SENIORS - AGES 14 TO 18**

**ALL PARTICIPANTS**

**ARE REGISTERED WITH THE YOUTH BOWLING COUNCIL OF CANADA AND ARE GIVEN INSTRUCTION BY MEMBERS OF THE MASTER BOWLERS ASSC. OF CANADA**

**TOURNAMENTS**

**ALL TOURNAMENTS ARE VOLUNTARY  
I BEAT MY COACH  
FAMILY TWOSOME  
I BEAT MY AVERAGE  
BRING A FRIEND  
AND MANY MORE ...**

**ALL CHILDREN'S AND ADULT LEAGUES START RIGHT AFTER LABOUR DAY  
CALL DAR AT (519) 853-0470 FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER**

**HAVE YOUR COMPANY PARTY OR FUND RAISING EVENT AT THE LANES**