



# SALUTE TO JOHNNY P. 50 YEARS OF SERVICE TO BVL



VETERAN ★ LEGEND ★ SPOKESPERSON ★ FRIEND



# BOWLING UNITES

**BVL** was founded by bowlers and is funded by bowlers. Every day since 1942, someone in the bowling community – bowlers, proprietors, businesses, volunteers, and industry supporters – has raised money for those who have served. What brings them all together? The answer is likely as simple as “we all know a veteran” – family, friend, co-worker, employee, neighbor. Almost everyone has a connection.

That connection has led to more than \$56 million in donations since 1942 for veterans and active-duty military. BVL has been the link to put those dollars to work by funding essential recreation therapy programs and services.

Associations of every size have made veterans a priority. The California State USBC is in a league of its own with more than \$9.7 million raised since 1949.

There’s only one bowling center in Mount Pleasant, Mich., but that didn’t deter the Mount Pleasant USBC as this small association collected more than \$6,100 for BVL in only one doubles tournament. The Iowa State USBC has totaled more than \$133,000 for veterans since 2008. A pandemic didn’t slow down bowlers in the Lone Star state as the Greater Dallas USBC raised more than \$59,000 during the pandemic.

“Everyone at BVL is so grateful for the commitment of the bowling family for our veterans,” said BVL Executive Director Mary Harrar. “Whether you are part of a large

association, a 6-lane bowling center or an individual donation, every single dollar will help make a difference in their lives.”

BVL is a highly-rated national charity with very limited overhead and a wide network of volunteers and ambassadors. Harrar also points out that anyone who donates to BVL can help determine where their dollars are utilized. Funds raised can either be designated for a specific qualifying recreation therapy program in their local region or marked for general use for national programs. Industry partners like BPAA, USBC, Brunswick, AMFQubica, Storm, Kids Bowl Free and many others are an integral part of BVL’s support network, finding common ground in their support of veterans to raise much-needed funds.

Veterans are always front and center at John Sommer’s Don Carter Lanes in Rockford, Ill., which has raised more than \$218,000 for BVL since 2008. The lineup of fundraising events



**Metro Detroit USBC presented two golf carts to Michigan Veteran Homes at Chesterfield Township to provide transportation for veterans around the 30-acre campus.**

# FOR VETERANS

is extensive and year-round - BVL collection cans throughout the center, 50/50 raffles, special events, car shows, and their annual BVL Bowl for the Troops event.

Harrar encourages creativity when it comes to fundraising events, and few do that better than Pat and Lisa Ciniello and their Bowland and HeadPinz Entertainment Centers in Florida. Their events, which include a 160-foot "Race to the Bar" (picture below), have helped raise more than \$257,000 for veterans in southwest Florida including the purchase of a wheelchair-accessible transportation cart for their area VA clinic.

Based in New York and Florida, the Maple Family Centers chain owned by BVL Chair John LaSpina got involved with BVL after the emotional impact of 9/11, a moment that "reinforced the indelible reality that freedom is never free. The evil that hit



**"Every dollar donated to BVL has helped to brighten the lives of thousands of veterans - I've personally seen the impact and I know that we as a bowling community can do even greater things for our veterans when we all work together."**

*John LaSpina*

my city is what our troops face every day - standing between all of us and those who do not respect the freedoms we enjoy as Americans." BVL is especially meaningful to LaSpina because of his lifelong friendship with bowling great and Vietnam vet Johnny Petraglia. "The man that he is and who he represents is what has made BVL very personal for me," said LaSpina, who has raised more than \$470,000 for BVL through in-house events, tournaments and funds raised through PBA50 and PWBA Tour events at LaSpina's centers. Among the programs that Maple Family Centers' donations have funded is an innovative virtual reality therapy at the Long Island State Veterans Home. His son Joe LaSpina was also instrumental in developing and testing a BVL Round-Up program for Brunswick's Sync system.



PHOTO: Bowland & HeadPinz Entertainment Centers

# THE HISTORY OF BVL: SERVING

## 1942



BVL was originally founded by the women's bowling association as Bowlers Victory Legion – with a commitment to support veterans and active-duty military. The original creed included this promise: *"Our debt to them is profound. The least they might expect is that all of us accomplish everything within our means to restore them to normal existences. Neither must we forget those now fighting for the same cause."*

## 1942-45



Members of the Women's International Bowling Congress purchased medical rescue planes to bring home wounded soldiers from World War II. American Bowling Congress members provided comfort kits to hundreds of thousands of soldiers.



## 1947

The first BVL tournament, a bowling competition among VA hospitals, was held with President Truman awarding trophies to the winners.

## 1952

Veterans Administration awards BVL the first ever Certificate of Appreciation.



## 1972

Bowlers Victory Legion becomes The BVL Fund. Bowling legend Helen Duval begins to travel all over the country for BVL teaching bowling to hospitalized veterans. She will teach thousands the benefits of her sport for more than 25 years.

## 1955

BVL receives Outstanding Service Award from the Blinded Veterans Associations.

## 1967

BVL increases its commitment to veterans of Vietnam conflict, providing \$25,000 to Army hospitals for soldiers waiting transfer to Veterans Administration hospitals.

## 1986

# \$1M

For the first time, BVL raises one million dollars during an annual campaign.

## 1992



Earl Anthony is named Honorary Co-Chair of BVL and spends the next year traveling with Helen Duval, running bowling clinics in VA hospitals all over the country.

# 50 YEARS

BVL celebrates its 50th Anniversary.

# VETERANS SINCE 1942

## 1998

The BVL Fund becomes the Bowlers to Veterans Link. The new name is to signify the inextricable link between bowlers and the well-being of America's veterans.



## 2007

BVL accepted as an Associate Member of the National Veterans Day Committee, a group of prominent veterans organizations who plan and participate in the National Veterans Day Ceremony each year at Arlington National Cemetery. BVL board members, representing America's bowlers, lay a wreath at the annual memorial services at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

## 2015



Hundreds of portable lane kits are sent to men and women overseas as part of Bowlers Salute America's Troops program.

## 2019

It took five months and five million steps for David "Kilroy" Kellerman to complete the largest individual fundraiser in BVL history. Kellerman took off nearly six months from his center, Mel's Lone Star Lanes in Georgetown, Texas, to complete the 2,192-mile hike through the Appalachian Trail, raising more than \$100,000 for BVL.



## 2022

BVL celebrated 80 years of service to veterans and awarded the largest donation in the organization's history, a \$500,000 grant to be split between two national veterans programs - VET CENTER and the National Association of State Veterans Homes (NASVH).



## 2023

Vietnam Veteran and PBA Legend Johnny Petraglia marks his 50th year in support of BVL. Petraglia, who served in the Army from 1967-68, has been a spokesperson for five decades.

# THINGS TO KNOW

BVL has raised more than \$56 million since 1942 to fund recreation



## WHO IS BVL?

BVL (Bowlers to Veterans Link) was founded in 1942 by the women's bowling association, and has been funded by the bowling community ever since.

## WHAT DOES BVL DO?

BVL supports Veterans by funding recreation therapy programs & services that address their essential physical and mental needs and ease transition back to civilian life.

## WHY DOES BVL DO IT?

Because our Veterans need the support that recreation therapy can provide.

- ★ 9.26 million Veterans use VA services ranging from primary care to in-patient hospitalization.
- ★ 5.36 million Veterans have service-connected disabilities.

Programs address many of the challenges that veterans face including:

- ★ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- ★ Missing or Injured Limbs
- ★ Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- ★ Agent Orange/Chemical Exposure

## PROGRAMS THAT BVL SUPPORTS

- BVL VA Bowling Tournament
- Community Programs
- Creative Arts Festival
- Golden Age Games
- VA Hospitals
- VET CENTER
- Veterans Clinics
- Veterans Homes
- Veterans Organizations
- Virtual Reality
- Wheelchair Games
- Winter & Summer Sports Clinic



**VET**★**CENTER** EST. 1972

Connection.  
Camaraderie.  
Community.

In 2022, BVL also partnered with VET CENTER – national community-based counseling center programs that help veterans transition from military to civilian life. In 2023, BVL donated \$250,000 to fund almost 50 Vet Center programs.

# ABOUT BVL

therapy services & programs for veterans and active-duty military.



## WHY DOES BVL RAISE MONEY FOR VETERANS WHEN THEY HAVE THE VA?

We both play different yet important roles in providing support to veterans.

### FEDERAL GOVERNMENT


The Dept. of Veterans Affairs has four specific missions to care for America's veterans:

- ★ Veterans Health Care
- ★ Veterans Benefits
- ★ National Cemeteries
- ★ "The Fourth Mission" (*improve the Nation's preparedness for response to war, terrorism, national emergencies, and natural disasters by developing plans and taking actions to ensure continued service to veterans*)

### BVL / RECREATION THERAPY

Where federal funds stop, BVL steps in with \$\$ to support ongoing veteran needs:

- ★ Recreation Therapy programs include a wide variety of activities such as sports, arts & crafts, music, bowling, adaptive equipment, tele-therapy, technology (virtual reality) and much more.



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# HOW YOU CAN HELP OUR VETERANS

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Every dollar makes a difference for a veteran. Over the past eight decades, those single dollar bills and large checks have added up to more than \$56 million to fund recreation therapy programs & services. You can hold a fundraiser any time throughout the year or go the extra mile for veterans by adding one more event during BVL Month in America each November.



Email: [mary@bvl.org](mailto:mary@bvl.org)  
Phone: 703-934-6039

## FUNDRAISING IDEAS

Round up your purchase to support BVL



In-League Tournament



Patriotic Pins



Pass the Envelope



Stand At Attention Placards



Visit [BVL.ORG](http://BVL.ORG) for more creative ideas for fundraising events.

[BVL.ORG/DONATE](http://BVL.ORG/DONATE)

