



BOWL • • PINION

by Jim Goodwin

The editorial opinions expressed here are offered to provoke thought on important and sometimes controversial or provocative issues.

Agree or disagree, we'd like to hear from you:
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All Hail California

When it comes to raising money for active duty and veteran Service men and women, California is the gold standard.

The beautiful State on our left coast too often gets a bad rap from the media and others about their politics and economic woes; but in raising money for the Bowlers to Veterans Link, California stands head and shoulders above the rest of the country.

We recently received an email for BVL Executive Director Elizabeth Montanya reporting that national contributions are up for the third consecutive year; pretty amazing when you consider the decline in league bowling, the weak economy, and the pathetic jobs forecast.

Helping BVL surpass the \$761,660 raised last season were more than 700 USBC associations, hundreds of bowling centers, and corporate partners. The top five states raised about \$215,000, with \$117,000 of it coming from California alone. Virginia is number two with about \$46,000. My home State of Texas is #3.

So what does California do that does not happen in other States? First, they have never abandoned the practice of talking to league bowlers one-on-one. They also hold tournaments,

have bake sales, BBQ's and picnics, and they even put on a rodeo.

But the centerpiece of California's effort is the State BVL Tournament, with multiple divisions for men, women, boys and girls. The annual event was recently renamed "The Helen Duval Veterans Tournament." Duval passed away in 2010, but during her Hall of Fame bowling career, her passion and charity of choice was BVL; and she sang its praises as a national spokesperson everywhere she traveled for decades.

The current chairman of California BVL is Rosie Parker. She cites one of the keys to success is recognizing all who donate; even the small \$2 donations are listed. Every State Association gets a certificate with the BVL logo and the contribution total. The top three get special awards.

And the personal touch is not forgotten. They work closely with the VA Hospitals, homes and centers, making personal visits as often as possible. "Our debt to our veterans is profound," says Parker. "It is important for us to help and support those who give so much so that we may continue to enjoy our freedom and be safe here at home."

This strong commitment to BVL started in 1950 in California, when the bowlers

declared "We won't forget you," to the veterans who bravely fought in World War II and Korea; and they have kept that solemn promise, raising more than \$8.6 million since then, far more than any other state.

Historically, in good times and bad, bowlers are a generous lot. It all started during World War II when bowlers, mostly women, raised hundreds of thousands for the BVL and the "Wings of Mercy" programs to support the war effort.

At that time, The Women's International Bowling Congress led the charge, donating more than any other sports organization; an incredible \$341,543, enough to buy a bomber and three air evacuation planes in 1940 era dollars.

That national spirit carried over to California. The WIBC War Service Committee was chaired by Violet Jean McClatchey, from New Jersey, who became the driving force behind the incredible effort. Violet would have fit right in in California.

Several very capable women are primarily responsible for the success in California. Aside from Duval and Parker are Elaine Hagin, Agnes Duffey, Joan Feinblum, Mary Lynly, and Joan Romeo; a formidable team by anyone's measure, and all have been active not just in California, but on the

national stage as well. And there are others; too many to name them all.

Of course we realize that a few men were also involved, but in California and many other States, the women have been the driving force. Hagin was the chief architect of the success in California and nationally for BVL. She served as California Chairman for 12 years and as National BVL Chairman for 20 years from 1988-2008.

These women and others they have mentored have been tireless and selfless in their efforts for BVL and bowling in general. They are constantly starting project after project, and failure never seems to be an option.

And they did not stop at simply sending money to BVL. Other projects, like their program to send thousands of pre-paid phone cards to active duty troops, has been great. They also sent dozens of Carpet Bowling Sets to provide a little fun for those in war zones, among other projects.

When it comes to raising big money for soldiers, we would like to see all of the States follow the lead of California . . . To lead the charge, the theme song could be borrowed from a famous West Coast band - "We Wish They All Could Be California Girls."

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