

To read the entire November 2013 Issue of International Bowling Industry magazine, [CLICK HERE](#)

FEATURE

BOWLING: A HERO'S GAME

By Anna M. Littles

Folds of Honor embraces bowling as a way to give back to those veterans and their families who have sacrificed so much.



Major Ed Pulido (left) and Next Level Bowling president and CEO Laurie Romano.

On a golf course in Myrtle Beach, Laurie Romano of Next Level Bowling was enjoying the game with a friend, Dale Niemela. Many in the bowling industry know Dale for his work with USBC and Storm Products. By design, Romano and Niemela's conversation centered on the nation's veterans, specifically, disabled vets and an organization committed to helping them get their lives back, Folds of Honor.

Romano and Niemela began to examine how the bowling industry and community could step up their game in honor of wounded warriors. Soon, they had a revelation that the sport of bowling was the perfect fit for disabled veterans.

Niemela introduced Romano to Major Ed Pulido, director of Folds of Honor, and a two-day event was set into motion. The event would take place in Myrtle Beach and would present the sport of bowling as an ideal activity for vets with disabilities to enjoy with their families. Romano acknowledged that even though Next Level Bowling is known for hosting events that benefit military servicemen and women, the challenges of coaching and working with the disabled was a game changer. Romano relied on Major Pulido for guidance for the best way to make it work.

Major Pulido's passion and commitment to veterans are fierce. A decorated hero, Bronze Star and Purple Heart to name a few, he has degrees in military science, marketing, criminal justice, and a Masters in logistics management and human relations. More importantly, he understands the challenges first hand that disabled veterans contend with on a daily basis. On August 17th, 2004, while serving in Iraq, he was hit by a roadside bomb which led to the amputation of his left leg. In spite of his loss, Major Pulido believed that he was given a second chance at life, and that second chance was driven by a strong need to help all vets and their families.

Major Pulido began his non-profit career with the United Way until he heard the call to work with Major Dan Rooney, founder and president of Folds of Honor. It all began back in 2005, when on his travels across the U.S., Major Rooney observed a growing indifference in American culture for respect and honor of fallen heroes and their families. Determined to change that, he launched Folds of Honor as a non-profit organization, his mission: to honor those veterans who have paid the ultimate price for our nation's freedom, the loss of life and limb. It is also part of that mission to remember the families devastated by such loss by awarding educational scholarships to their children.

It was here that Major Pulido knew he belonged. Since he's been with Folds of Honor (six years and counting), they have been able to raise \$25 million and have awarded over five thousand educational scholarships. However, he is quick to state that it is not just about the fundraising. It's about going back to those who have paid the price for freedom. It is at the core of the commitment to provide support to those in need and make sure no family is left behind. Folds of

54 November 2013

FEATURE



Laurie Romano and Dale Niemela. Niemela was the brainiac for the event.

Honor started in the golf industry because Major Rooney is a professional golfer. Promoting patriotism and getting people to play golf all over the country, on behalf of the troops, was part of the original goal.

However, Major Pulido feels strongly that the bowling community has a lot to give as well and can also participate in the promotion of patriotism. Folds of Honor decided to utilize the bowling community as a vehicle to promote all the services they provide. "Bowling is a great avenue to encourage our heroes who are struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome, traumatic brain injuries, and/or amputation." The beauty of it all is that, "Bowling is the only sport that veterans and their families can go to get out, have a great time and do together as a family! At the end of the day, it is all about fun! And it's a wonderful way for the bowling industry and community to embrace patriotism and give back."



Mike Luongo submerging in the ocean for a good deed with a MacMaha ball.

On August 30th and 31st, the nation's warriors came out in force, and the bowling community was there to embrace them. It was a very humbling experience for Laurie Romano. For her, it was not just the event, it was witnessing the community embrace the whole foundation. There were many volunteers and industry coaches including Dale Niemela, Mike Luongo and Ralph Solari (Storm Roto Grip), Brett Caramigino (Brosevic staffer), Ash Pomatto (DVB staffer and Army veteran) and honorable mention goes out to Joseph Gethers, a disabled vet who has won two gold medals and one silver in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Tampa. All of these volunteers and coaches flew in from all parts of the country to help give of their resources, time and expertise to the vets. Romano was moved and overwhelmed with the amazing generosity displayed by the bowling industry and community.

Additional shout-outs go to William Pearson, coordinator of the two-day event along with Tony Todd, manager of Little River Lanes, and Larry Nowak, proprietor of Waccawee Lanes, who generously donated the use of their bowling centers. Approximately 50 vets participated with hundreds of people offering support, while nearly \$49,000 was raised.

According to Romano, they were able to develop "a new infra-structure that would enable professional bowlers to

Lightning Strikes
Trussville, Alabama (40 Lanes)

We commendable Paul Newfield and its products of this fine LLC, for making David D'Arcy a healthy, safe, fit and then back to the best of health.

Hansell & ASSOCIATES, INC.
Professional Bowling Consultants
10000 South Blvd. #1000
(800) 222-9131

54 November 2013

FEATURE



A moment of silence during the opening ceremony of the Field of Honor event, paying tribute to our military veterans and heroes.

come out and teach our warriors how to bowl, balance themselves on their approaches with or without prosthetics, and coach their families as well. "Now everyone can play."

Major Pulido emphasized that all of the bowling coaches were exemplary in their demonstration of strength with honor. It was a beautiful way for patriots who don't serve in the military to connect with patriots who do.

Inspired? It's not so much about raising money as it is about providing an opportunity for disabled vets to come out, with their families, learn the game and have a great time. It's a way to remember the sacrifice of these brave men and women and to support their families.

Members of Bowling Through a variety of club composed of veterans and their families.



Lane Benson, president and CEO of Next Level Bowling, in front of the camera presents Field of Honor.

To learn more about Bowling for Our Heroes, contact Major Ed Pulido at Field of Honor, 4025 E. 90th St., Suite 9092, or www.MajorEdPulido@foldsouth.com.



Anna M. O'Brien is a screenwriter and freelance writer and producer originally from the Bronx, New York, now residing in Lake Forest, California. You can see her work on YouTube, IMDb, or on her website at www.annabob.com.