Award Winning Newsletter November '26

THE ILLINOISAN

Celebrating 250 Years of the U.S.A.

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ISBPA ANNUAL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING DELIVERS INSPIRATION & RECOGNTION WHILE UNVEILING NEW PROGRAM INITIATIVES

Networking, camaraderie, industry education, and exciting new initiatives highlighted the **2026 ISBPA Annual General Membership Meeting and Convention**, which brought more than 80 bowling industry professionals to Hotel Arista in Naperville, Illinois, October 26–27.

The two-day gathering featured an engaging educational seminar, a Supporting Member Trade Show, an inspiring Annual Awards Ceremony, and a General Membership Business Meeting filled with encouraging reports and

important announcements. Among the highlights were the launch of a new statewide team championship, an expanded Member Benefits Package, and a significant increase in youth scholarship funding.

The convention opened Monday afternoon with the ISBPA Board of Directors meeting, where the directors approved a balanced budget for 2027. Following the board meeting, directors joined the general membership for an informal social gathering at the hotel's conveniently located Zorba Lounge. Food, beverages, and Monday Night Football provided the backdrop for an enjoyable evening of networking and conversation, reinforcing the personal relationships and exchange of ideas that make these annual gatherings so valuable to the association and its members.



SEMINAR ON CANVA

The convention continued Tuesday morning with an engaging and informative presentation by the "Canva Rapper," **Roger Coles Jr.**, who demonstrated the many benefits of incorporating Canva into a bowling center's marketing and promotional efforts. Coles provided valuable insight into how bowling center operators and their marketing teams can use Canva to create professional-quality content for both digital and print applications while maintaining consistent company branding.

An exceptionally talented and entertaining presenter, Coles ranks among the finest seminar speakers in the industry, regardless of subject matter. His energetic delivery, practical advice, and engaging personality have helped him build a social media following of more than 800,000. To learn more about Roger's services or connect with his office, click **CANVA**.

ISBPA SUPPORTING MEMBER TRADE SHOW | Following the seminar, attendees moved next door for the annual I**SBPA Supporting Member Trade Show**, providing an opportunity for bowling center proprietors to connect with the suppliers and vendors who support the association.

Eighteen ISBPA Supporting Members participated in the trade show, generously contributing an impressive assortment of giveaways, ranging from musical coolers, credit vouchers, and thermostats to bowling balls and even a bowling pin costume. The latter particularly delighted **Amanda Kouros** (pictured right) of **River Rand Bowl**, who now has her Halloween outfit!





LUNCHEON WITH BENEFITS | Following the trade show, attendees gathered for a buffet lunch, during which **Dan Johnson** of **Strike N' Bites Bowl** in Lansing, Illinois, took home $425 as the winner of the annual BVL 50/50 raffle. Additionally, **Kids Bowl Free** owner **Bruce Davis** presented ISBPA with a check for $9,280, reflecting the strong participation of Illinois member centers in the program. Bruce also announced that Illinois tied for the largest increase in program participation nationwide, earning the association an additional $2,000 bonus, which was presented earlier this year.

AWARD CEREMONY | The highlight of the convention was the **ISBPA Annual Awards Ceremony**, which recognized an impressive lineup of honorees, ranging from lifelong contributors to the bowling industry and association to prominent personalities representing mainstream media. The combination of heartfelt recognition, entertaining presentations, and memorable moments provided the audience with an enjoyable and engaging 45-minute program. To view segments of the recipients' acceptance speeches, click on their names in the photo captions below. Or, to review an overview of all the speeches together, click **COLLAGE**.



The 2026 ISBPA Annual Award Recipients — Pictured L-R: **Skip Wolfe**, *Award of Gratitude*, recognizing more than 25 years of service to bowling center and pro shop operators statewide; **Bill Brennan, Jr.**, *Louie P. Petersen Award*, ISBPA's highest honor, recognizing his outstanding dedication to the association at both the state and national levels; **Duane Dow**, *Award of Recognition*, honoring nearly five decades of producing bowling center videos throughout Illinois; **Mark Neumann**, *Patrick F. Bosco Award of Merit*, recognizing decades of dedication to maintaining bowling lanes and playing surfaces throughout the region; **Bob Daman**, *President's Award*, honoring more than 20 years of leadership of ISBPA's In-School Bowling program; and **Marcus Leshock**, *Award of Gratitude*, recognizing his outstanding coverage and promotion of bowling on WGN Morning News.

BUSINESS MEETING | The convention concluded with a lively 90-minute General Membership Business Meeting, packed with valuable information, industry updates, and several exciting announcements. Among the highlights was a report presented by **Amber Habetler** of **Western Bowling Proprietors Insurance**.

Amber reported that several damaging tornadoes swept through Illinois during the year, resulting in approximately $6 million in insurance claims. Consequently, policy deductibles will increase significantly, although certain deductible buy-down options may be available to help offset the increases. Members with questions are encouraged to contact Amber directly by clicking **AMBER'S EMAIL**.

On a much brighter note, Amber presented ISBPA with a record-setting honorarium check totaling $31,698, reflecting the continued strength and value of the association's partnership with **Western Bowling Proprietors Insurance**.



Amber Habetler of Western Bowling Proprietors Insurance presents ISBPA Executive Director Keith Hamilton with a $31,698 check to support association programs, as ISBPA President Mike Melone (seated) looks on.

ISBPA President Mike Melone delivered a comprehensive report reviewing the association's activities, accomplishments, and progress throughout 2026. To read his report in its entirety, click **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**.



BPAA Membership Director Rory Clark (pictured right) traveled from the national headquarters in Arlington, Texas, to attend the meeting. Clark praised Illinois' successful membership recruitment efforts and shared several encouraging developments at both the state and national levels, including the following highlights:

- *Membership Growth*: Illinois ranks fourth nationally in BPAA membership, with 169 member centers representing 3,828 lane beds. Nationally, BPAA membership has grown to 3,408 centers, representing 76,003 lanes—an increase of 73 members over the previous year.
- *Membership Retention*: BPAA reports an impressive 98% membership renewal rate. Additionally, 520 centers nationwide have enrolled in the newly launched Automatic Renewal Program, including 27 Illinois centers.
- *Bowling University Participation*: Illinois recorded increased participation in BPAA's Bowling University educational programs, with 1,182 courses completed by 296 students representing 25 bowling centers.
- *Pepsi Rebate Increase*: Clark also announced that the Pepsi Rebate Program has increased its rebate from $7 to $8 per gallon, providing additional savings opportunities for participating centers.

The meeting also featured the introduction of three exciting initiatives designed to strengthen tournament participation, enhance membership value, and support the next generation of bowlers: the new ISBPA Best of the Best Team Championships, an expanded ISBPA Member Benefits Package, and a

significantly enhanced Annual Youth Scholarship Program through a new partnership with the Chicagoland BPA.
Additional details on all three initiatives are featured below.

---NEW PROGRAM #1---

ISBPA LAUNCHES THE *ISBPA BEST OF THE BEST TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP*

June 5, 2027, Pheasant Lanes, Bloomington, Illinois



The **Illinois State BPA** is raising the stakes with the launch of an exciting new scratch team tournament that promises to bring out the best bowlers in the state, generate excitement in your bowling center, and give your customers an opportunity to compete for a State Championship while proudly representing your center!

The inaugural **Illinois State BPA Best of the Best Team Championships**, **presented by Miller Lite** will be held at Pheasant Lanes, Bloomington, on June 5, 2027.

The tournament will feature two qualifying squads, with the top four teams advancing to head-to-head semifinal competition. Event sponsor Storm Bowling will livestream the semifinals, bringing the excitement of championship competition to bowling fans throughout Illinois and beyond.
For complete tournament details, click on the flyer at right.

Dates, Location & Deadlines

•Saturday, June 5, 2027 | Pheasant Lanes, Bloomington
•Center Registration / $150 Entry Fee: Due Feb. 1st.
•Team rosters (five bowlers and up to three alternates) must be submitted by May 15, 2027. Include Name, Gender, Name of League used for Qualifications and number of games bowled.

Bowler Criteria

•Bowlers must be at least 21 years of age.
•Bowler must have recorded at least 45 games bowled in an organized league within an ISBPA Member Center between 6/1/26 thru 5/31/27.
•National Touring PBA / PWBA Bowlers are not allowed.
•Only one Non-Touring PBA / PWBA bowler per team allowed.
•Only one team per member center allowed.
•Bowlers can represent only one Center and bowl on only one team.

Tournament Format

•Each team must include at least one male and one female bowler.
•Tournament will be conducted on a scratch basis.
•Each bowler will bowl three games, resulting in a 15-game team total.
•Brackets will be available to all bowlers based on the three-game qualifying round.
•Team standings will be determined by the combined scratch score of bowlers.
•The four teams with the highest total pinfall will advance to the semifinals Semi-Final matches will consist of a one-game roll off to be held concurrently: No. 1 seed faces No. 4 and No. 2 faces No. 3.
•The winning teams of the Semi-Finals will bowl in a one game match for the title.
•Ties will be broken by a one-frame roll-off, each bowler rotates until tie is broken.
•For cash prizes outside of the top four positions, the prizes will be split between finishing positions.

---NEW PROGRAM #2---

ISBPA EXPANDS MEMBER BENEFITS WITH CASH INCENTIVES AND REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAMS

Adds Incentive Program for Participants in Tournaments and Programs

Beginning with the 2027 tournament and program season, the ISBPA will introduce an enhanced member benefit program offering partial reimbursement for Coaching, Bowlers Ed, and Defibrillator purchases.



Additionally, each member center will be entered into a random drawing for cash prizes, with additional entries awarded based on participation in ISBPA tournaments and programs. The more your center participates, the greater its chances of winning! To learn more about these exciting new benefits, click on the attached flyer.

---NEW PROGRAM #3---

CHICAGOLAND BPA JOINS ISBPA TO CREATE THE NEW ANNUAL ISBPA | CBPA YOUTH SCHOLARSHIP

Application Deadline is December 31, 2026 for 2027 Funding

The **Chicagoland BPA** and **Illinois State BPA** have joined forces to increase their annual youth scholarships from $1,000 to $2,500 per recipient. One

scholarship will be awarded to a graduating high school senior boy and another to a graduating senior girl, funding $5,000 in total.

The scholarship application timeline has also been revised, with applications now due by December 31, 2026, which will be funded in 2027.

To learn more, click on the flyer to the right. To access the scholarship application, simply scan the QR code provided on the flyer.



TIME TO RUN THE STRIKE FOR VETS TOURNAMENT

Run Qualifiers Now for Veterans Day Finals



It's time to host the **Strike for Vets Target Score Tournament**! This exciting, easy-to-administer program offers bowling centers a terrific opportunity to introduce open-play customers to tournament competition, engage league bowlers, generate additional business, and, most importantly, raise funds for the **Bowlers to Veterans Link** (BVL).

The tournament is simple to administer, inexpensive to operate, and easily adaptable to bowling centers of any size. Best of all, the Don Carter chain of

bowling centers has generously offered to share its experience and provide guidance to any proprietor interested in launching the program.

Here's how it works
Centers are encouraged to conduct the tournament in conjunction with a patriotic holiday, such as Independence Day or Veterans Day, providing a natural opportunity to promote the event and recognize those who have served our country.

Phase One – Qualifying

- Conduct qualifying over a designated period, whether a week, a month, or longer, with promotional support from flyers and front-counter personnel.
- Suggested entry fee: $2–$5, with 50% donated to BVL and the remaining 50% allocated to the tournament prize fund.
- Open to both league and open-play bowlers.
- Qualifying is simple: Bowlers advance to the Finals by recording at least one strike in the fifth frame of any game.

Phase Two – Finals

- Conduct the Finals on or near the selected patriotic holiday.
- Each finalist is eligible to bowl two games. Complimentary lineage is encouraged.
- Before bowling, each finalist selects a target score he or she believes can be achieved.
- Bowlers who achieve their target score in Game 1 need not bowl Game 2.
- One gutter ball per frame is permitted per game.
- Every bowler who achieves his or her target score shares equally in the prize fund. If no finalist reaches the selected target, prizes may be awarded to those finishing closest without exceeding their target.
- While prize distribution remains at the center's discretion, an equal split among all successful finalists is recommended.

Ready to Get Started?

To make implementation even easier, ISBPA has prepared editable promotional artwork, with versions featuring both $2 and $5 entry fees.

CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD THE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Note: Centers using the provided artwork are encouraged to add their own logo above the BVL logo, as space at the bottom of the design is limited.

For additional information or assistance implementing the tournament, contact John Sommer, tournament creator and longtime supporter of veterans' charities, by clicking **STRIKE FOR VETS**.

SUPPORT THE THANKSGIVING GIVEAWAY AND

GIVE FAMILIES A THANKSGIVING MEAL

Member Center Strike N' Bites Program Renewed

Strike N' Bites Bowl owner **Dan Johnson** has a simple request for his fellow ISBPA member centers: **Help feed a family this Thanksgiving for just $50.** With 169 member centers across Illinois, we have an opportunity to make a meaningful difference for families who might otherwise go without a traditional Thanksgiving meal.

Last year, this charitable effort served 675 families and distributed 200 bags of groceries. Imagine the impact we could make if every ISBPA member center participated!

For more information or to make a donation, please visit **www.tecgives.org**.



PBA ANNOUNCES 2027 SCHEDULE

An increase to 30 Televised Shows Compared to Prior Year

Print and display the 2027 PBA Tour television schedule at your center! With 30 scheduled televised events, more than in 2026, the expanded schedule provides additional opportunities to showcase professional bowling to your customers.

“I am excited about PBA’s year-over-year audience growth and the reimagined PBA Tour for 2027, including a completely new presentation and the best bowlers on the planet competing in an array of innovative formats that represent a new era for the sport,” said **Peter Murray**, PBA CEO. “The 2027 PBA Tour will be a season with a clear beginning, middle, and end, where every event matters and every week builds toward something bigger. Championship Sundays provide appointment viewing, our Majors create milestones throughout the season, and the introduction of the PBA Playoffs gives fans a true postseason before the sport’s biggest stage, the PBA World Championship.”



LEGISLATION UPDATE

by Trevon Sylvester of Michael Best Strategies

November will be a consequential month in Illinois politics, beginning with Election Day on November 3 and followed shortly thereafter by the General Assembly's fall veto session. With all 118 Illinois House seats and a portion of the Senate on the ballot, lawmakers will return to Springfield with the election behind them and several gaming-related issues still in play.

Among the most significant developments for ISBPA members this month are new video gaming rules proposed by the Illinois Gaming Board on October 22. **The proposal includes changes to how patrons pay for and access video gaming, while also creating new requirements and options related to cashless wagering, player accounts, self-exclusion and rewards programs.** Given the potential impact on bowling centers that offer video gaming, ISBPA members should be aware of these proposed changes and closely follow the rules as they move through the state's rulemaking process.

Components of the proposed rules include:
1) **Changes to Cash Handling at VGTs**: Under the proposed rules, video gaming terminals would no longer accept cash directly. Instead, patrons would obtain a voucher through a redemption terminal before beginning play. Cash could still be used to purchase a voucher, but the transaction would take place at the redemption terminal rather than at the individual VGT. This would represent a significant change in how patrons currently fund play at licensed establishments.

2) **Self-Exclusion Program for Problem Gamblers:** The proposal would bring video gaming into Illinois' statewide voluntary Self-Exclusion Program, currently available at casinos and sportsbooks. Patrons would go through an identity-verification process designed to confirm that they are eligible to participate and are not enrolled in the program before accessing video gaming. This would extend self-exclusion protections to VGT play and introduce a new verification step for patrons.

3) **Optional Cashless Wagering and Patron Accounts**: Terminal operators would have the option to offer cashless wagering through individual patron accounts. Operators choosing to provide this option would be subject to additional regulatory requirements, including age and identity verification, privacy and security protections, Know-Your-Customer requirements, anti-money laundering safeguards and responsible-gaming controls. The cashless wagering component would be optional for terminal operators rather than a requirement for every establishment.

4) **Player Rewards Programs**: Terminal operators that choose to offer patron accounts would also be permitted to establish rewards programs connected

to those accounts. This would create a regulated framework through which eligible video gaming patrons could participate in player rewards programs, while tying those programs to the broader account-based system contemplated under the proposed rules.

The fall veto session is scheduled for November 17-19 and December 1-3, 2026. We will be watching closely to see whether Sen. Preston follows through on his announced legislation and whether any other video gaming proposals emerge during the six-day session.

ISBPA SUPPORTING MEMBERS | PRODUCTS & SERVICES

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(847) 709-6213
AVS offers a full range of consulting services for bowling center arcades including layout design, game selection, attraction consulting, installation, training, warranty and parts.
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Frank Marrese
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frank.marrese@brunswickbowling.com
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Website Email

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St. Louis, MO 63146
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(863) 734-0200
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Website

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Bruce Davis
1950 San Marco Road, Marco Island FL 34145
(800) 720-0410
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Website Email

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Chicago, IL. 60606
618-530-6061

Chain Sales Executive
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QUBICA AMF BOWLING
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Manufacturer of bowling equipment
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(435) 723-0403
Bowling Ball and Accessory Manufacturer
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WESTERN BOWLING PROPRIETORS INSURANCE

Cameron Linder
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(800) 200-9998
The official Insurance carrier of the ISBPA.
Website Email

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Carey Tosello
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Tampa, FL 33689
(863) 602-4850
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PROFESSIONAL BOWLERS ASSOCIATION
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