

Roseville seniors Wii bowl their way to better health

Local activities director named 2011 National Wii Bowling Coach of the Year

BY SENA CHRISTIAN
THE PRESS TRIBUNE

Until 10 years ago, Flo Eng was a tournament tennis competitor, and regularly played bocce and went bowling.

"I was an all-around athlete," Eng said.

Now 99 years old, she's slowed down over the past decade but continues to indulge in a sport she loves: bowling. Wii bowling that is, in which she has a 200 average.

"It's good to sit down and take it easy and get your exercise," Eng said. "It's the best thing for seniors."

The resident at Vintage Senior Living at Sierra Pointe in Roseville is part of the community's six-person Nintendo Wii bowling team, Stryke Force, coached by the center's Activities Director Tom Gray. Players' ages range from 85 to 99 years old.

In October, the National Senior League named Gray its 2011 National Wii Bowling Coach of the Year. He managed Vintage Senior Living's 13 teams throughout the west coast that competed remotely in the league's spring championships and 16 teams in the fall championships.

He was chosen for his enthusiasm, management abilities and leadership skills, according to a news release.

"It was a big honor for me," Gray said. "I hadn't expected it. The recognition is nice, but that's not the driving force."

Instead, he strives to improve the lives of residents through an activity that supporters say provides socialization and camaraderie for seniors, and offers valuable health benefits they might not otherwise get.

And Wii bowling is perfect for a generation that grew up doing the real thing, Gray said.

"It allows them to go back in time and continue the game and they can really enjoy it," he said.



Joan Mounts, 80, uses a Nintendo Wii controller to strategically launch a bowling ball down the lane during practice with her team, Stryke Force, at Vintage Senior Living at Sierra Pointe in Roseville.



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Flo Eng, 99, Sierra Pointe resident



"I enjoy it very much. I like competition of any kind and that's why I like it a lot."

Jack Lucas, 88, Sierra Pointe resident, is the team's star with a 245 average



"I love it. It gives me something to do. And I work off calories."

Herb Goldman, 90



"I haven't done the real thing for 30 years. I used to bowl. It's just nice to have something to do."

Joan Mounts, 80

"They can't play baseball or jog but this is a sport they can do."

They play in a community room with a large flat-screen television where anyone can come in and watch.

While bowling, players

stand to use the controller or remain seated, which is suited for people in wheelchairs. The activity gets the blood flowing and stimulates the mind, as players figure out angles and techniques. It also improves hand-eye coordination.

The game benefits people with arthritis and dementia, Gray said, and helps prevent memory loss. Wii bowling also helps residents at risk for isolation.

Once a month, Stryke Force plays the team at the Mistywood senior community in Roseville.

"Believe it or not they actually cheer the other team on," Gray said.

Stryke Force member Herb Goldman, 90, used to bowl with his fraternity brothers in college. He averages a score of 180.

"I love it," Goldman said. "It gives me something to do. And I work off calories."

The team's star is Jack Lucas, 88, who averages 245. He used to bowl when he was younger, and he usually rolls several strikes during a Wii

game.

"I enjoy it very much," Lucas said. "I like competition of any kind and

that's why I like it a lot."

As coach, Gray manages all the teams in Vintage Senior Living com-



Tom Gray, activities director at Vintage Senior Living at Sierra Pointe, was named

2011 National Wii Bowling Coach of the Year

munities. He organizes their games and turns in all the scores to the National Senior League.

Teams — more than 100 in 21 states — play once weekly during seven weeks of the regular season in hopes of advancing to playoffs and championships.

The league, founded by Olympic athlete Dennis Berkholtz in 2009, manages two national Wii bowling championships and a golf championship each year.

"We have a lot of fun," said Stryke Force player Joan Mounts, 80. "It's a good thing to do. I haven't done the real thing for 30 years. I used to bowl. It's just nice to have something to do."

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