

“Just try. . . try to participate. . .”

This was the impassioned plea from one of our own, Rebecca Cole. Rebecca was speaking on a video post on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/rebecca.cole.543/posts/3094411453961754>) about what she calls, a “crucial time with bowling in the Northwest.” She states that words on a post were not enough so she created her emotional video post. She did what she does best using her own tools to communicate in her own personal way. Words are what I do though, and so I am going to use my own tools to communicate in my own personal way.

Rebecca’s impassioned plea was spurred on by the current government mandates requiring masks or face coverings to be worn indoors at public places. For bowling, this means an uncomfortable situation for many bowlers as wearing a mask while bowling is difficult. Anybody connected at all to the sport has heard the declarations of bowlers refusing to bowl because of the mandate to wear masks while bowling. These bowlers cite any number of reasons, and most of which are very valid. This refusal to bowl is what Rebecca refers to as bowling being in a crucial time.

Already in a precarious position with limitations to revenue, the bowling centers of our area, the lifeblood of our sport, are already hanging by a thread just for survival. If bowling centers cannot keep their doors open, it does not matter how impassioned bowlers are in their desire to continue the sport – there will simply be no place to bowl. We are still a little ways away from the point of no return for this existential crisis to our sport, but we bowlers need to acknowledge that this is a real threat to the very existence of our sport, and that we are heading down a very scary path towards that end unless we do something about it.

Rebecca is calling on bowlers to support our centers. “Visit if you can; if centers are not open, call and see what you can do to help,” she says in her video post. She points out that it is on us as bowlers to make this happen. As such, Rebecca makes the plea, “. . .get creative, just try . . . try to participate.”

What makes her plea so resonant is not just the emotion, but the call to action to **bowlers**. She makes no pretense of trying to placate any social or political agenda. She makes the call to rise above such agendas and act out of a responsibility to ourselves as bowlers. Go beyond and get above the social and political strife and do something, do something positive, move forward and work towards the common goal of keeping our sport alive.

It is easy to use rhetoric to denounce a personal slight, perceived or real, that seems unjust and unfair. It is easy to shout in the wind and air out complaints. It is much harder though to do something about those personal slights, to take action to go above and beyond those personal slights to overcome and thrive. Bowlers, right now and in this crucial moment, have the opportunity to rise above and show the

perseverance and determination that sets grassroots bowlers apart from the rest of the sporting world. We cannot easily change the government mandates, but what we can do is work together, as bowlers, to help our own. This is something we bowlers can do. Sure, we can shout out and voice our displeasure and frustration, and nobody is saying not to do that, but we can do more. We can do what I have seen bowlers do time and time again – lift up our own and support.

I have personally seen the awesome power of the bowling community to rally around and support our own. When I had taken seriously ill a few years back, I was amazed at the outpouring of support – financially, emotionally, and through offers of goodwill – that helped me get through a very difficult time in my life. Our bowling centers are now in that same place, seriously ill, and it is up to us as bowlers to once again show the power of our support.

Rebecca makes some suggestions – try a face shield instead of mask – but the operative words she is using are, “*just try.*” We can do that. We can get creative in practicing responsible social distancing and using face covers. We can demonstrate the strength of our support and once again show why I am so proud to call myself a bowler.

Gary Yamasaki, OSUSBC Association Manager

**There have been a few days since Rebecca’s video post originally appeared and there has been a considerable show of support. This is not a surprise as the bowling community is once again showing its strength. While this blog may now seem redundant, I am leaving my blog as is as there may be some that need to reference this message through means other than a Facebook post.*