

Ok, so this is my third try at writing my latest blog entry. The first attempt was regarding what bowling might look like once bowling centers are allowed to reopen. That changed as I saw the number of counties entering Phase I of the Governor's reopening plan and the comments regarding this portion of the plan. The comments still seemed so divisive – it was too much or it was too little depending on what side of the argument you were on. So, I then began to write on whether or not the divisive climate would permeate our bowling community. After getting some input on that though, I could see where that could devolve into just more divisive rhetoric which was completely not the intention but seems to be where things go these days.

So, what am I writing about now? I decided to go down a different path, something more positive – Recognition. With the postponement/cancellation of many local association awards banquets (and with more undoubtedly to come), those that would normally be recognized by local associations will not have the opportunity to receive the well-deserved attention that usually goes with such recognition. That is a shame.

Whether its for superior performance, meritorious service, or other awards of recognition, these recipients are deserving of more than just a passing glance on a website or a post on a social media platform. Upon talking behind the scenes with some of the people charged with administrating these awards, this is very much a concern this year. I have heard some creative ideas that will hopefully make up for some of the lost tradition and attention that accompanies the presentation of these awards and am looking forward to the outcome of these creative processes.

Most of the awards given are pretty self-explanatory – Superior Performance means good bowling, Meritorious Service is for service performed within our sport. There are others that are given – youth scholarships for outstanding youth bowlers both on and off the lanes, proprietors of the year recognizing the outstanding contributions from those we could not do without – and these are also pretty self-explanatory. Yet one award goes out that may not get the attention that it rightly deserves as it can often be so blurry in definition – Volunteer of the Year.

Most simply think of a volunteer as someone doing a job without pay, and that's a perfectly adequate definition. However, particularly in the current climate of our society, volunteer work is not just a sacrifice in pay, it's a symbol of dedication and passion. Without volunteer workers, be it an association director, a youth coach, a league secretary or any other job that fits the definition of doing a job without pay, bowling would not be the sport that it is today. Think about those examples – The association directors that are charged with running annual traditional tournaments that so many of us look forward to all year are mostly volunteer workers; those packed houses for high school tournaments are all led by volunteer coaches; the league secretary that while technically not a volunteer based on our definition of without pay puts in far more hours of work than the weekly fees justify.

Now, it really does sound like most of this category could fit into the Meritorious Service category, and it rightly does. More often than not though, the Meritorious Service category implies a body of work over a lifetime. Volunteer of the Year is something that is more immediate and possibly fleeting. It is that difference that makes the Volunteer of the Year so difficult to recognize and yet is what also makes it so distinguishing. The Volunteer of the Year has done something within the last year that is deserving of recognition in the here and now where the Meritorious Service award honors a body of work over a longer period of time. So, the next time you hear Volunteer of the Year, please realize that not only has

this person dedicated him or herself to our sport, but they did it with the immediate passion that goes above and beyond the norm – and that's a distinction that should be recognized.

Gary Yamasaki, OSUSBC Association Manager