

Special device helps handicapped bowlers use up spare time

By W.W. EDGAR

The grand old game of bowling, which has brought joy to the lame, the deaf and the blind, now is brightening the lives of wheelchair patients.

An unusual device that fits over the laps of patients and serves as a chute allows them to roll the ball down the alley with the same enthusiasm as other ardent bowlers.

At the moment the program is confined to Drakeshire Lanes in Farmington and serves wheelchair patients from nearby Oak Hill Nursing Home.

The federally-funded program is directed by the Cerebral Palsy Association. It has attracted 35 wheelchair guests who bowl at least once each month.

MARK MRS. social director at the nursing home, is planning to form a league for the winter season. Joyce Leidatton, who had just registered a strike with the aid of the chute, smilingly said, "We're looking for someone to beat."

An auto accident 10 years ago left her partially paralyzed. But she is one of the most ardent of the wheelchair group and tells you that she is improving all the time.

On an adjoining lane Tom DeMott, who has muscular dystrophy, toppled the 10 pin to complete a spare and confided that he had been bowling just about a year.

"But I've had a 150 game," he said with a sparkle in his eye. He, too, expressed the desire to form a league and maybe a circuit that would include all the nursing homes in the area.

To make conditions easier for the patients, Drakeshire Lanes has provided a ramp at the rear of the building. This avoids any steps. A ramp is also the means of getting up to the approaches.

"This is an outstanding program," commented Frank Miller, Drakeshire manager, "and we will do everything within our means to add a bit of joy

to their lives." While there has been wheelchair bowling of sorts in the area, this is the first time it is being done on regulation lanes and under standard conditions.

A year ago the Middle Belt Nursing Home in Livonia provided bowling on an improvised lane that consisted of joining two long tables and erecting planks on the side to prevent the ball from falling off. And they used small plastic pins.

The Drakeshire program, is part of the leisure activities program arranged by the Cerebral Palsy Association with Jan Watson as the adult coordinator. Officially it is known as the living opportunity program, and thus far has met with enthusiasm

THIS WHEEL CHAIR activity is another chapter in the part that bowling plays in the lives of the handicapped. First, it was the blind bowlers who took to the game. Under the leadership of Harry Hunter, they formed their own association and now have

their own leagues and tournaments—even national championships.

Next came those who suffered the loss of arms or legs. They often used the same rail that was employed by the blind to reach the foul line.

Years ago in Livonia, there was one man who lost both arms and employed a contraption that spread across his back and had an artificial arm with clamps to grip the ball. On his left side he had a gadget that, upon pressing, released the ball.

Now comes the adjustable chute to help the wheelchair patients. The Oak Hill Nursing Home group proudly tells you that two of their number have registered great scores in their first attempt. Marilyn Hodges has posted a 153 game and John Lawler has a 163 to his credit.

More important, though, is the fact that their lives have been brightened—and it all has come about through the second oldest sport known to man—a game that has been traced back to 3200 BC.



Tom DeMott uses a special chute designed for the handicapped at Farmington's Drakeshire Lanes. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)



Joyce Leidatton shoves the bowling ball toward the pins.



Stop right there

Tom McDonald, 12, of Farmington runs through the sprinkler at a park in downtown Farmington. McDonald, along with two of his friends, spent the afternoon riding their bikes and jumping through the sprinklers the city had set up to water the lawns. What could be a better way to spend a hot afternoon? (Photo by Craig Newman)

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