

## **G.I.F.T. Beach Party 2009 – An Historic Event**

Several years ago, participation in Cleveland's Gay/Lesbian Invitational Fellowship Tournament had decreased to such a degree that the Committee considered "packing it in". However, with an infusion of new blood (new Committee members, new sponsors), new ideas (host hotel with hospitality suite, \$10,000 guaranteed prize fund, streamlined awards banquet), and an incredibly low entry fee (\$64), the Committee decided to give it one more try. Low and behold, participation began to increase. As a matter of fact, Cleveland's 21<sup>st</sup> tournament, "G.I.F.T. Beach Party 2009", had its highest participation in over 10 years! 144 bowlers from 63 cities, 10 states, and Canada took part in what proved to be an historic event not only for G.I.F.T., but also for one bowler in particular.

Registration was held Friday evening, June 12, at the Strongsville Holiday Inn, the host hotel for the weekend. The Hospitality Suite, nicely decorated in keeping with the Beach Party theme, was hopping well into the wee hours of Saturday morning, generously stocked with products from sponsors Miller Brewing Co., and Seagram's.

The bowling portion of the weekend began on Saturday morning, June 13, at Freeway Lanes in Parma (the new home of Cleveland G.I.F.T.) with the Singles Event, followed by a picnic style lunch provided free of charge by the G.I.F.T. Committee. Storm (perennial sponsor of G.I.F.T.) and Ace Mitchell Bowling Supply provided several bowling balls to be given away during the weekend.

The Doubles Event followed and no one could have predicted what was about to happen. Paul Tryanowski (with an entering average of 213), from Royersford, PA, rolled a sweet 248 in the first game of Doubles. That was followed up by 11 consecutive strikes in the second game, resulting in a 299 game. But the best was yet to come in the form of a perfect 300 game, for an incredibly amazing 847 series! This was, of course, the highest 3 game series ever bowled in 21 years of Cleveland G.I.F.T. In addition to winning over \$500 in prize money over the weekend, a trophy, and a Certificate of Achievement from the G.I.F.T. Committee, Paul received a Commemorative Plaque from Freeway Lanes, and items of recognition from IGBO. Unfortunately, like some other tournaments on the IGBO circuit, G.I.F.T. is not (as clearly stated in the official Tournament Rules) a USBC sanctioned event. Regrettably, Paul's tremendous performance will go officially unrecognized by USBC. However, those who witnessed this feat will forever remember Paul's incredible accomplishment.

After a long but exciting day of bowling, G.I.F.T. participants joined over 600 Greater Clevelanders for a relaxing, yet invigorating 2 and ½ hour dance cruise, complete with a spectacular Lake Erie sunset, aboard the tri-level Goodtime III Cruise Ship. The 637 attendees became the second largest group in the 21 year history of the G.I.F.T. Cruise. Dance tracks were laid down by the resident DJ and live entertainment was provided by Lounge Kitty. A representative from Time Warner Cable, presenter of the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual G.I.F.T. Cruise and proud sponsor of G.I.F.T., awarded prizes to the top three "Dance Revolution" competitors. For the first time ever, a rainbow flag flew from the bow of the ship. Clearly, from comments heard as folks disembarked, a wonderful time was had by all.

The Team Event on Sunday morning, June 14, began with the traditional Strike Ball competition. Thirty-six bowlers, one from each team, bowled simultaneously in an effort to string together as many strikes as possible. The last person standing received \$100 for his team.

The Awards Banquet was held shortly after the Team Event at the Holiday Inn. After some cocktailing and sharing in a delicious buffet, bowlers settled in to anxiously anticipate the official results. In addition to the enhanced \$11,600 bowling events Prize Fund, \$8800 was paid out in other events such as Optional Scratch, Strike Pot, Mystery Score, Brackets, and various Raffles. A total of \$20,400 in prize money (the highest amount ever for a G.I.F.T. event) was up for grabs during the weekend, an average of nearly \$145 per bowler. A closing party followed the streamlined banquet, hosted by the legendary Leather Stallion Saloon.

Refreshed by the tremendous success of G.I.F.T. 2009, and with a renewed desire to continue to grow, the G.I.F.T. Committee, once again under the direction of Bill Palarchio, is already planning for Cleveland G.I.F.T. 2010. Be sure to visit the G.I.F.T. website [www.clevelandgift.org](http://www.clevelandgift.org) to see complete 2009 results and for updates.