



Stars and Strikes keeps growing with Brunswick and bowling

Back in 2003, when Atlanta-area friends and neighbors Jack Canouse and Chris Albano first talked about opening a business together, they quickly narrowed their thinking to something family-friendly.

“Chris and I each had three kids, and we were looking to start a business that would provide families like ours with something to do,” recalls Canouse. “My brother suggested we consider bowling.”

“Chris and I did research and visited a nearby Brunswick center,” continues Canouse. “Both of us had financial backgrounds but knew nothing about the bowling business. We talked to Brunswick, and they explained the FEC idea (there were very few FECs back then). We loved the concept — having options such as arcade and laser tag in addition to bowling hit home with us as parents.”

“Bowling has a customer base of everybody. To a business owner, that’s a great advantage.”

Bowling proved to be the ideal business for the partners. “Bowling is a product unlike any other,” Canouse says. “It’s not limited to older or younger, or to the athletic, or exclusively to men, women, or children. Bowling has a customer base of everybody. To a business owner, that’s a great advantage. You can walk into a bowling center on any day and see folks from age 5 to 85. It’s a great product to have since it appeals to virtually every person in the country.

And since there aren’t any rising costs, we can even offer specials like 99-cent bowling and still make money.”

Before building their first Stars and Strikes in 2005, the owners looked at the Brunswick Build to Bowl program, and decided it was perfect for them. “Brunswick helped us with the architect, contractor, and vendors,” says Canouse. “Since then, it’s gone beyond our just buying a product from them — the people at Brunswick have become friends. Chris and I really value that — we’re relational people. The Brunswick folks are very quick to respond. If we have an issue on Saturday night, we call someone’s cell phone and they answer. They don’t sell you a product and walk away.”

Bowling has proven to be so successful for the partners that Stars and Strikes will soon boast 11 locations, including the recently opened Huntsville, Alabama facility (the company’s first venture outside of Georgia) and a soon-to-open Augusta, Georgia site.

“In part because of our relationship with Brunswick, ever since we opened our first center, we have loved bowling and loved the outcome of our business,” says Canouse. “At some of our locations, the majority of our revenue comes from the arcade, but people still identify us as a bowling entertainment destination. Bowling will always be the core of our business.”

The newest Stars and Strikes locations feature Brunswick lanes and equipment, plus redemption and games, laser tag, bumper cars, and more. Newer Stars and Strikes locations also use Brunswick Sync scoring and management system. “In some newer locations, we use Sync as our POS,” Canouse explains. “We had Micros previously, but Sync is much better.”