

## Introduction

The International Gay Bowling Organization (IGBO) was formed in 1980 and incorporated in 1985 as the non-profit organization. IGBO is committed to serving and educating its member organizations on an international level by promoting *Unity, Communication and Fellowship* throughout the international gay and lesbian bowling community.

IGBO is composed of approximately 13,500 members. We invite interested bowling organizations, individuals and other organizations that share our ideals to become members of the world's largest single gay sports organization.

This handbook is designed to provide new and established members a comprehensive resource to help them understand IGBO, including its history, future objectives, organizational structure, legislative procedures and processes and their individual roles and responsibilities in helping us grow the organization. The handbook will be updated on an as needed basis, and updates will be provided to all IGBO representatives.

This handbook is the property of IGBO. The information provided is for the benefit of IGBO members only. Distribution of any part of the handbook to non-IGBO individuals is discouraged.

This handbook is provided to each IGBO representative for his or her benefit. It should be passed on to your successor to provide him or her, a valuable indoctrination into IGBO and especially to help him or her understand the individual responsibilities of each IGBO representative.

In 1997, the sitting IGBO Board of Directors (BoD) proposed the following Mission Statement to the General Membership. It was adopted by the membership at the General Membership meeting held in Nashville, Tennessee:

***“IGBO, the international gay bowling organization, provides educational services, communication avenues, and social opportunities to promote the sport of bowling and to enrich the lives of individuals through leagues and tournaments worldwide.”***

Thanks to everyone who helped make this project become a reality, especially: Daryl Carter, Bill Harrison, Bruce Blonder, Jim Berry, Ed Chetaitis, Mark Castleberry, Vince Andrzejewski, Gene Sides, David Theiss, Michael Champion and Jorge Ramirez.

A special ‘Thank You’ to Randy Peterson, a longtime member of the IGBO Board of Directors, who "retired" June 30, 1990. He agreed to direct the production of the handbook, and he used his resources in the printing industry to help save IGBO considerable money in producing this project.

## ***What does IGBO do for me?***

There are two kinds of answers: one business and one personal. Both are integral components of the total IGBO.

IGBO is a business. It was incorporated in the State of Washington in 1985 as the non-profit organization IGBO, Inc. That carries legal and financial responsibilities. The Board of Directors, elected by the general membership, volunteer to accept legal and financial responsibility for the organization at their own personal risk. In conjunction with the two events it sponsors annually, IGBO assumes total legal responsibility. IGBO signs the contracts with hotel/bowling houses in the host city of the Annual and Mid-Year events -- not the Tournament Committee. As a result, IGBO, not the host Tournament Committee, risks potential lawsuits if there is an injured bowler or other legal problem. IGBO provides that protection at very real personal risk to the individual Directors. So for any potential candidates.

First and foremost, during the 1980's IGBO was directly responsible for identifying the need for a communications network to link a growing gay bowling community. The founders discovered the common bond in 1980 and within one short year, IGBO was born and growing rapidly. IGBO created the network that everyone today takes for granted. IGBO also sustains that network through its ongoing communications with every member organization, updating the directory and providing it to all members for their benefit.

Think about it. Most of the tournaments on the IGBO tournament calendar owe their success to the communications network that IGBO founded and maintains. Only a small handful of the tournaments on the IGBO circuit have created their own self-sustaining communications network, and they generally are exclusively used to promote one event a year. IGBO has a handful of dedicated volunteers (Directors and committee members) who help keep this network alive and current year after year. Imagine for a minute what it would be like if the IGBO link in our gay bowling chain disappeared. Without that central link, most of the tournaments likely would disappear within a few years. Then the personal part of our organization would begin to disappear too -- *fellowship*.

IGBO sponsors two major bowling events a year: The Annual and Mid-Year Tournament. During the Annual and Mid-Year tournament week, our Board of Directors conducts their business meetings and general membership meeting. Over the years it became obvious that there needed to be better and more consistent standards created to organize the events. By 1986, a series of problems at the annual tournaments prompted the voting representatives to begin urging IGBO's Board of Directors to assume more control over the members' tournaments. During the next four years, IGBO gradually accepted full control over both the Annual and Mid-Year Tournament. The control encompasses setting standards for the bidding process and tournament organization, financial accountability and to ensure that the membership is given the absolute priority of each event. In developing this system of control, the Board seeks to work with the host committee and to give it autonomy in creating an event that has the city's own imprint. This system still is evolving as we work to correct weaknesses, and, hopefully, it will produce bid packages and interested committees that are completely dedicated to serving the most important audience: our members.

IGBO created a Marketing Committee in 1988 to begin developing tangible programs to promote IGBO to its own members and later, to the outside world. Unfortunately, efforts to promote new programs are often hampered by too few volunteers. As IGBO has grown, we've seen ideas arise and disappear without action, but we've also seen some ideas through to development. Past proposals have included:

- An IGBO product line
- An IGBO membership card
- IGBO promos
- IGBO fundraisers (not to conflict with local ones)

We want to develop these ideas and other suggestions, but the number one problem is *people*. It takes people to volunteer to get the work done. Compare this effort to what it is like in your own community. How many people does it take to make your own fundraising efforts successful? IGBO cannot do it with two volunteers, or 12. It will take lots of people – people like you – to make these types of projects succeed. Those are some of the business reasons for why IGBO exists.

As important as they are, IGBO really does offer more to the people side of the question -- the league bowler who has never gone to a tournament, the bowler who goes to one-two tournaments a year and the many who are "tournament junkies!" IGBO provides something for all of them – but only if they want to take advantage of it.

We talk a great deal about how much IGBO wants to promote *fellowship* and *unity* among our very diverse gay and lesbian bowling community. Many believe we've done a good job, but it's obvious that we've got to do better because others simply don't believe this "line!" But think about it for a minute.

**Have you ever gone to a tournament?** Then you've experienced IGBO.

**Have you ever made a friend at a tournament that you probably never would have met?** Then you've experienced IGBO.

**Have you ever talked to someone at a tournament that you had never met before?** Then you've experienced IGBO.

**Have you developed a relationship with someone you met at a tournament?** Then you've experienced IGBO.

**Do you travel to visit friends you met at a tournament?** Then you're experiencing IGBO.

But *fellowship* isn't just for the tournament bowler. Have you ever gone on a business trip to a city where you didn't know a soul? You're "over" the bar scene, but you don't know where to go or what to do? Have you ever gotten the name of an IGBO rep in the city and called him/her up and said: "Hi! I'm a bowler from Timbuktu and I'm here in town on business. Could you help me find a good place to eat, etc?" You'd be surprised how many people would leap at the chance to show you a good time. And that's what IGBO *fellowship* is all about, too!

*Fellowship*, you see, isn't one of those tangible things you can put in your pocket or touch. It's something you experience. It's a friendly hello, a smile, a laugh or two and a shoulder to lean on. You have to experience *fellowship* first hand to know what it's all about. Friendship can't be explained in the abstract. It has to be lived.

That's what IGBO can do for you.

Of course, there's another side to the age-old "What is IGBO doing for me?" question. That is: "What are you doing for IGBO?" Are you giving positive support to your league rep, your league officers and the other people who are trying to give you something you can enjoy – a fun night/weekend of bowling?

If you believe IGBO should be doing something else for you, let us know. Encourage all of your members to let their league officers, IGBO rep, regional director or any IGBO Board member know. Nothing positive can be accomplished if you just sit back and complain. Unless the leaders know what you're thinking and unless you choose to become involved in the solution process, nothing can happen.

IGBO was born and continues to grow because there are lots of people in our gay bowling community who believe in the organization and who have made a conscious decision to be active participants in building our future. They are people who truly are doing something for IGBO.

You and your friends are invited to join in IGBO's mission and help make this organization better for everyone, in the IGBO spirit of *Unity, Communication and Fellowship*.

### ***Mission Statement***

The International Gay Bowling Organization provides educational services, communication avenues, and social outlets to promote the sport of bowling and to enrich the lives of individuals through leagues and tournaments worldwide. *adopted (05/97)*

### ***Values***

IGBO believes in *Unity, Communication and Fellowship*. *adopted (10/85)*

### ***Vision***

IGBO: the sports membership organization of choice for the gay community worldwide. *adopted (05/01)*