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GAUGE

Bowling for Friendship

Local athlete finds life after tragedy

by Yusef Najafi

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Cecilia "C.C." Ford has come a long way since losing her partner, Delores "Dee" Smith, last year. Smith died from causes that remain obscure, Ford says, because Smith's family denied their relationship and continue to keep her in the dark. More than a year later, Ford is working again and keeping a positive outlook on life.

In addition to launching Washington D.C.'s League of Women Bowlers, and ditching retirement to return to D.C.'s elementary schools as a physical education teacher, the 56-year-old resident of Northeast is also celebrating the inclusion of her league in the fall edition of *USBowler*, a nationally circulated magazine for avid bowlers.

"It's such a wonderful time in my life right now," she says. "They say that you don't start living until the second half of your life, and everything that I should've known then, I know now. It's a wonderful life and the people I've encountered along the way helped to make this so wonderful."

Those people include participants in the league, who according to Ford are "99.2 percent" gay. The league itself is broken down into seven teams, including three players in each, who played for 32 weeks during the 2006-2007 season.

Ford is the treasurer, secretary and co-founder of the group. Her efforts were highlighted in *USBowler's* "Legal Secretaries" section, which introduces readers to ideas and problem-solving solutions that league secretaries face.

Ford's idea to host a banquet for the League of Women Bowlers, in late June, in which she awarded each player with personalized awards, bowling pins and other prizes, was the subject of the article.

"I wanted to do something special for them," she says of her teammates.

"They were so deserving because we went through a lot trying to get this league going this year, and they survived the whole year and they came out on top as winners, and are very proud of themselves.... With all the negativity going on in the world today, it felt so good to see so many people happy."

The new season for the League of Women Bowlers kicks off at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Sept. 9, at the AMF Laurel Lanes, 15013 Baltimore Avenue, North Laurel, Md. For more information, or to join the 2007-2008 league, visit <http://leagueofwomenbowlers.org> or call 202-997-3918.

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