

Enjoying a behind-the-scenes look at a local, family-owned bowling alley



When friends of ours suggested we get a group together and go bowling last weekend, I knew I wouldn't have any trouble selling my family on the idea. We love bowling.

We were especially curious to see Greenmount Bowl because friends of ours—David and Nicole Richardson—bought it in July, and this would be our first visit under their ownership.

David and Nicole's son, Lucas, and our older son were classmates until our boys changed schools in the fall. I knew Lucas was an outstanding bowler—he's won the Western Maryland State Championship multiple times. But I don't know anything about running a business, and especially a bowling alley. I was looking forward to seeing what Greenmount Bowl was like.



We arrived at the bowling alley, which is in Hampstead, Md., ready to bowl. We put

on our bowling shoes, put in our food and drink orders—I have a son who loves bowling alley fries—and started bowling.

Maybe I should stop at this point to admit that I am a terrible bowler. John is a good bowler, and our boys do particularly well when they have bumpers on the gutters. We were with a fantastic, fun group, and it would be hard to say whether the children or the adults had a better evening.

As the evening was winding down and we were saying goodbye, Nicole asked us whether we wanted to see a behind-the-scenes tour of the bowling alley.

I couldn't say yes fast enough.

We all lined up, listened to the instructions on how to stay safe on the tour, and followed the tour into the area behind the pin setters.

A gentleman named Mo who keeps the setters running greeted us and told us he had been setting pins since the mid-1950s.

We stood and watched from behind as the setters cleaned up the fallen pins and put new ones in their places.

The clatter of the pins up close, and the movement of the machines were absolutely fascinating.

We noticed different colored pins that Mo explained can be used for special contests—like to win a pizza.

I was in awe of all the bolts and metal pieces and tools and equipment that go into keeping the setting machines in order. I was in even more awe of Mo, who clearly knew how the machines worked and was able to keep everything going behind the

scenes.



Mo showed us the tenpin machines too, and they were interesting, but the older duckpin machines were really fascinating to me.

After the tour, I stopped to chat with Nicole and David, the owners of the 24-lane alley who are parishioners at St. Bartholomew Church in Manchester, Md.

They both work full-time jobs in addition to their work at Greenmount Bowl. But even though they seemed to be running flat-out the whole evening, taking food orders and greeting people and delivering sodas to bowlers' lanes, they also seem happy and really excited about all the bowling alley offers, and all the opportunity they see there for the future.



They have also added Greenmount OTB, an off-track betting location opening Jan. 22 in Greenmount Station, not on the same property, but at the restaurant next door to the bowling alley. Both Nicole and David have careers in Maryland's horse industry. (David is executive director of the Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association and Nicole is director of finance for the Maryland Horse Breeders Association and Maryland Million and the administrator of the Maryland Bred Race Fund.)

Buying and giving new life to a community bowling alley, while also preserving and

celebrating its history, must require a leap of faith. But I'm excited to see how Lucas and his family enjoy this new adventure.

And we loved our behind-the-scenes tour!