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The 20th Annual Theresa Awards Honoree: John M. LaSpina

An Excerpt from the Theresa Foundation Newsletter, Winter 2014

For years, President of Maple Family Centers John LaSpina has been sharing his joy of bowling with families, sports enthusiasts while creating fundraising opportunities for not for profit agencies in a striking way. It is his continued commitment to raising funds and awareness for those in need that John has been named this year's Theresa Award Recipient.

Under John's leadership, Maple Family Centers has organized hundreds of fundraisers for non-profit agencies raising more than \$500,000 over the past few years. John also makes his staff available to teach non-profit agencies how to host a successful fundraising event, which includes sponsorships, raffles and gifts. John's team works side-by-side with agencies to assure a positive event and all participants have a great time. By following his passion, John is introducing new people to the sport of bowling, booking Maple Family Centers' lanes, and helping the community.

Maple Family Centers consists of five family-owned bowling centers with locations throughout Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island and Clearwater, Florida. John's father launched Maple Lanes in 1960. Over the past 53 years John and his brother, Peter, began to run the daily and fiscal operations. John began to expand Maple Family Centers making it become what it is today. A true family affair, John's children, Teresa and Joe, are currently working in the business. John describes his "work" as a business of a lifetime. A tireless businessman, he considers his field entertainment and one that is built on relationships. He appreciates his long-time customers and staff who feel like family. John's entrepreneur and giving spirit keeps bringing people back to the lanes generation after generation.

Intrigued by the bowling industry, John has been intricately involved in many professional organizations promoting bowling locally, nationally and internationally. He has even met with the International Olympic Committee to discuss including bowling as part of their competitions. Maple Family Centers' famous "Lane to Go" has been featured on national television shows such as the Rachael Ray Show and LIVE with Kelly and Michael. As part of his efforts, Maple Family Centers was recently awarded the prestigious 2013 Media Award by the Bowling Proprietors Association of America for its national media efforts in creating awareness for the bowling industry. This was the first time this award was presented to a proprietor in the bowling industry.

John defines bowling as a lifetime sport that anyone -at any age -can participate in and enjoy. Bowling is a great way to get family together. He has developed toddler, youth and teen programs, as well as programs for the elderly and those with special needs. Through bowling, John promotes traditional values and clean fun. John's enthusiasm is infectious — it makes you want to go grab your family, grab a ball and go bowling!

Joan and Charlie Robert brought John and his wife, Anita, to a Theresa Foundation Awards Dinner and they have been hooked ever since. Anita is a retired Children's Librarian who takes a great interest in the Theresa Performing Arts Academy. And once John found out that we do a Bowling Tournament for the Theresa Foundation (Theresa's Fun Day"), he recruited us to his Farmingdale Lanes and we really learned how to do it right! His personal touches, hands on approach and engaging attitude will bring us and other charities back to his lanes every time.

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