

# MVTHS bowling team begins second season

## Interest in team has increased

By VANESSA WELCH

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MT. VERNON — While shouts of encouragement rang through the alleys, pins were bowled over by a group of Mt. Vernon Township High School students.

Tryouts for the MVTHS bowling team have officially begun and coach Dave Wagner said interest in the team has grown since its beginning last year.

"This year the response has been overwhelming," Wagner said. "I had 42 boys tryout and right now over 16 girls are trying out."

Wagner, who also serves as manager at Nu Bowl Lanes, originally became interested in bowling when he was 15 and worked at a bowling alley.

Last year Wagner said he decided to start a team as popularity for bowling has spread.

"High school bowling has been picking up over the past five to six years statewide," Wagner said. "I went to the school board last year and asked for permission to try and get a team going. They agreed to it and I had better response last year than I anticipated."

Wagner said bowling provides a chance for those who might not participate in other sports to join a team.

"It's a new avenue," Wagner said. "Not everybody can play football or



Mt. Vernon Township High School freshman Heather Topping throws a strike during tryouts for the high school bowling team. Both girls and boys are getting ready for the season to begin as the team starts its second year. VANESSA WELCH/REGISTER-NEWS

basketball, and it's a wonderful opportunity because the students get to work in teams while learning the whole time."

MVTHS senior Jeanette Odle, the only remaining student from last year's girls team, said she agreed bowling has introduced her to a diverse group of classmates.

"I think it's great because it allows a lot more different types of people to come together," Odle said. "It looks like we're going to have a pret-

ty excellent season. We're stepping into it with baby steps."

Once practices begin, Wagner said he and assistant coach Kristi Johnson will teach students basics such as coordinating footwork with timing. Other skills team members will learn include "how to read lanes and how to throw a ball so they start trusting in the ball and letting it do the work."

Wagner said students enjoy bowling more once they master technique, and

some continue to pursue it after high school and may even receive scholarship money.

"One girl joined my team last year because her friend talked her into it," Wagner said. "She ended up falling in love with bowling and this year she's going to University of Illinois and is on the girls bowling team there. I think that's quite an accomplishment for her first year out."

Wagner said practices and home meets will be held at Nu Bowl Lanes.

The season kicks off with a boys match on Nov. 22 at Collinsville as part of the Cahokia Invite tournament.

The boys and girls first home meet will be against Herrin at 3:30 p.m. Nov. 25 at Nu Bowl Lanes, and Wagner said community members are encouraged to attend.

Next year Wagner said the local bowling team will be involved in a South Seven Conference through the Illinois High School Association.

As popularity for bowl-

ing grows, Wagner said he is looking forward to what the current season will bring.

"I really enjoyed it last year and I'm looking forward to it again," Wagner said. "When kids come out on Friday and Saturday night they bowl to have a good time. So when they get on the team they change their attitude and they really give it 100 percent. And that is encouraging because it has now turned from recreation time to an active sport."