

Conner Kolessides receives Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award

Prior to the start of opening round of the Youth Invitational Scratch Singles Tournament at Bowl America Gaithersburg on January 19, it was announced that Conner Kolessides of Great Falls, Va., was selected as the 2013 recipient of the prestigious NCAUSBCA Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award, which is named in honor of the late association Hall of Fame member who was a strong supporter of area youth bowling.

Conner received a plaque, a \$100 scholarship, and his name will appear on the plaque that contains the names of the nine previous award recipients.

He was born into a bowling family, with his dad and older brother serving as role models. From the time he could walk, Conner set up his little plastic bowling pins in the hallway and quickly learned the difference between a strike, a spare, and a split. When he could talk, he wanted to “bowl for real” at the bowling alley, which he did at age 2 at Bowl America Dranesville. When “officially” old enough, he started league play there, and by the time he was 7, he had a fingertip ball and a big hook.

Now 16, he holds a 238 average and has rolled two perfect games. He rolled his first 300 game—along with 19 consecutive strikes—at last year’s NCAUSBCA Youth Championship Tournament at Bowl America Bull Run during the doubles event that he won with his partner, Matthew Ritchie. Conner rolled his second 300 game at his home center, Bowl America Dranesville, last November.

Conner started competing in tournaments, and at age 10, earned his first scholarship award. In his very first 600 Club Tournament, he went on to win the 2009 Winter Doubles with Giovanni Ponce. This qualified him for the Tournament of Champions, where he advanced to match play, being one of the youngest bowlers to ever do so.

His other 600 Club titles include the 2012 Spring Singles and the 2012 Fall Doubles (with Richie Hercules), where Conner topped the field with his 749 series. In fact, last year, he won seven tournaments, including the 2nd Annual Chuck Collier Tournament, the Fourth of July Youth/Adult Tournament at Bowl America Bull Run, and two Sport Shot Challenge events.

Conner captured second-place honors at two Vern Burke tournaments, and he also finished in the Top 8 in the



A Division at the 2011 and 2012 Youth Invitational Scratch Singles tournaments.

Conner has medaled in the Virginia Commonwealth Games, making him eligible to compete in this summer’s national event to be held in Hershey Park, Pennsylvania.

This past summer, Conner experienced his first North Pointe Jr. Gold National Championship event in Indiana, finishing in the top third of his field and placing highest among area competitors. He already qualified for this year’s competition.

At every competitive event he has entered, Conner has maintained his composure, a high code of conduct, respect and admiration for tournament officials and his bowling peers, and exemplary sportsmanship. He has willingly participated in two bowling clinics offered by fellow bowler Malcolm James and has occasionally helped his current coach, Shelley Huss, with other youth bowlers, sharing his time and talent, but mostly his enthusiasm, to promote the sport of youth bowling.

Past Gruszkowski Youth Star honorees

2008 – Eric Helmrich, Adam Mitchell, Allen Windsor

2009 – Alonso “A.J.” Kinney Jr.

2010 – Malcolm James

2011 – Jason Eman, Brandon Lowe, Kayla Meadows

2012 – Zahir Holmes