

Anderson, DeBat, and Speights receive Ted Gruskowski Jr. Youth Star Award

Samuel Anderson, Tabitha DeBat, and Amara Speights are the latest recipients of the prestigious NCAUSBCA Ted Gruskowski 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. The announcement of the 2015 winners took place prior to the start of opening round of the NCAUSBCA 46th Annual Youth Invitational Scratch Singles Tournament at Bowl America Manassas on January 17.

The award winners, honored for their bowling achievement and/or service to youth bowling, each were presented with a plaque and \$200 in scholarship funds, which will be administered through the USBC SMART program. In addition, their names will appear on the plaque that contains the names of the 13 previous award recipients.

SAMUEL ANDERSON Woodbridge, Virginia

Samuel, who began bowling at the age of two and first competed in a league at age 10, grew up in an avid bowling family: His father bowled in several adult leagues, as did his sister who competed in youth and junior leagues.



Outside of his leagues at Bowl America Woodbridge and the Youth Travel Scholarship League, Samuel has competed in a wide spectrum of tournaments, ranging from NCAUSBCA

Youth 600 Club events to, for the past two years, the North Pointe Junior Gold Championships. He's been victorious at several local Youth Sweeper events, the Clyde Robert Perkins Virginia State High School competition, and the 600 Club Fall Singles held last fall at Bowl America Burke, where he dominated the field with a 753 series. In addition, Samuel has many notable finishes, placing second with Nick Nanalig last November at the NCAUSBCA 600 Club Doubles at Rinaldi's Riverdale and a final round appearance in the

2014 NCAUSBCA Youth Invitational Scratch Singles. Last summer, Samuel had the second highest performance among Virginia bowlers at the North Pointe Junior Gold Championships in Buffalo, N.Y.

Samuel has rolled four perfect games, including the only one tossed in the 2014 Invitational, and he has a high series of 822.

Though he has a significant list of accolades, his attitude towards others and the sport really distinguishes the type of bowler and person he is. Samuel supports others no matter the circumstance and always strives to do his best until the very end. He also performs well in school, maintaining a very respectable GPA above a 3.0.

Samuel Anderson's tenacious attitude embodies the true essence of a champion, and this, along with his on-lane successes, strongly support the reasons why he is so deserving of the NCAUSBCA Ted Gruskowski Jr. Youth Star Award.

TABITHA DEBAT Manassas, Virginia

Tabitha was born in Mississippi, but she moved to this area with her family after Hurricane Katrina devastated a large portion of the south in 2005. She started bowling in 2008 at Bowl America Chantilly and for the past four years has competed at Bowl America Manassas.



When she moved to Bowl America Manassas she was in the junior/senior league where she rolled her first 600. She has

bowled in the travel league for nearly three years. During this time, she became a Junior Gold member.

During her time at Bowl America Chantilly, she placed several times in the NCAUSBCA Youth Championship and Vern Burke tournaments and won scholarship money.

Tabitha bowls in any tournament that she can. She

bowls in the city tournament, 600 Club tournaments, Vern Burke tournaments, Junior Gold tournaments, Invitational tournament and any local center tournaments that the centers may have. She has also bowled in the Virginia State tournament.

Last year, she was the only female to reach the final round of the NCAUSBCA Youth Invitational Scratch Singles Tournament, ultimately placing fourth in the B Division. She later participated in the National Junior Gold Tournament in Buffalo, New York.

Tabitha currently does a lot of community service within the sport of bowling, working with younger bowlers whenever needed. Tabitha helps with the “Have-a-Ball” program at Bowl America Manassas, and she helps at school fairs with the bowling booth. She also volunteers with the Special Olympics Area 23 bowling program. When she works with these groups, she stresses that bowling is a fun game and those present should not get upset with themselves if bowling poorly.

A few coaches this year started a program at Bowl America Manassas entitled “Steppin’ Up to Chicago” to help youth bowlers with their mental and physical aspects to the game. Tabitha joined the group of 35 that meets monthly.

Whether helping others or seeking ways to improve her own game, Tabitha DeBat has demonstrated a dedication to bowling that merits her the NCAUSBCA Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award.

AMARA SPEIGHTS Woodbridge, Virginia

Amara, a 14-year-old eighth-grader at Rippon Middle School in Woodbridge, Va., started bowling when she



was five in Stafford, Va., where she joined the Stafford Youth Bowling League.

Amara joined the youth League at Bowl America Woodbridge in 2008, and each season her average has increased. At the end of 2008-2009, her average was 110; in the seasons that followed, her average increased to 142, 164,

174, 201, and 204. It currently is 206.

When Amara was only 10 years old, she moved up to the senior division.

Past NCAUSBCA Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award recipients

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

2013 — Conner Kolessides

2014 — Gene Blair, Nicholas Dean, Michael Simpson

On March 23, 2013, Amara, then 12, bowled her first 300 game with a set of 791, her highest series.

Amara has received the NCAUSBCA Triple Crown Award the past two seasons in the Saturday Youth League at Bowl America Woodbridge. She also bowls in the Youth Travel League, which uses the tougher Sport lane patterns. In 2013-2014, her final average in that league was 180, with a high game of 246 and a top series of 643.

Amara won the 2013 Virginia State Pepsi Tournament in the U12 Girls Division by 330 pins and had the highest six-game total, 1,292, among all of the girl divisions. The following year, she again placed first in the Pepsi event, this time in the U15 Girls Division.

She qualified for the North Pointe Junior Gold Tournament in 2013 and 2014 in the U15 Girls Division. In Detroit in 2013, she placed 72nd out of 169 bowlers. Last year, in Buffalo, N.Y., the right-hander had a great run: She qualified for the finals and made it to match play, averaging 178 and tying for seventh place in a field of 208.

Off the lanes, Amara also enjoys playing basketball. She currently plays on the girls varsity basketball team at Rippon Middle School in Woodbridge.

Amara, a straight “A” student, was accepted into the Gifted and Talented Program for Prince William County Public Schools. She was nominated by her fifth-grade teacher and has been in the program ever since. She also has received the U.S. Presidential Academic Achievement Award several times for her academic accomplishments.

For her bowling accomplishments, Amara Speights is a worthy recipient of the NCAUSBCA Ted Gruszkowski Jr. Youth Star Award.