

# Classic Pinball

A nostalgic addiction revisited through Lyon's business

BY KENDRA WALKER

It began with an unorthodox birthday present. Kevin Carroll walked into his basement to receive a gift from his wife, Carole. What he discovered was a buzzing and chirping pinball machine illuminating the room. "I was blown away," Kevin says. "I actually had a tear in my eye."

This, Kevin explains, started it all. After hours of playing nightly and inviting friends downstairs to try, Kevin realized pinball was something special and intoxicating. "We kind of got addicted," he says. "So we thought, let's get another one." But they didn't stop at a second machine. Not even close.

Today, the Carrolls own somewhere between 140 and 170 machines in their

collection. "Too many," Kevin laughs. The machines have overflowed from their basement to the garage, dining room and living room. "Our three-car garage has never seen a car."

But the pinball machines are not just for Kevin and Carole's enjoyment. The machines are part of their shop, Lyons Classic Pinball, now an eight-year-running business. The Carrolls believed that if they could put decent pinball machines out in the public, maybe other people would be as into it as they were.

With about 40 machines circulating in the shop, Lyons Classic Pinball has the largest public collection of pinball machines in Colorado, with the shop's oldest machine dating back to 1961. "I'll buy a game broken and bring it



Jovan Fish, of Jamestown, gets into a game of Monster Bash pinball at Lyons Classic Pinball. (Paul Litman)



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back to life," Kevin says.

He makes sure every machine in the shop is well-maintained and rotates them between the shop and his home. That way, there's never an out-of-order machine on site and customers see a variety of games.

The shop has generated many regulars, some driving to Lyons on a daily basis. Customers have even started their own Mile High Pinball League, where participants sponsor weekly competitions.

The shop also hosts monthly pinball tournaments, a big hit every third Thursday of the month. Pinball veterans and world-ranked players show off their competitive pinball skills among packed crowds.

The shop has seen all ages and abilities, some trying a game of pinball for the first time and others there to thrive on the nostalgia. People always ask Kevin if the kids enjoy his shop. "Yeah, the kids between 20 and 85," he says as a joke. "It's about the big kids."

Kevin makes it part of his job description to interact with his customers, offering first-time players tips and basics to the game. "Once you realize there's an objective and you can get better each time, that's when it gets addicting," he says. "I try to help them with that."

Lyons Classic Pinball is a labor of love for Kevin and Carole, as 50 cent games don't add up quickly. But their enthusiasm to have fun proves making a living off quarters can be a success. "I made this place work because I really wanted it to," Kevin says. "And I love it."

Lyons Classic Pinball has brought a rising, nostalgic culture to Colorado. Other shops have started up because of the Carroll's unique idea, and their pinball machines can now be found at various locations in the area. Lyons Classic Video, their sister operation, is a video game arcade at Oskar Blues Grill & Brew.

"If you had told me about pinball the day before my wife gave me that first machine, I would have never thought that I'd be that into it," he says. But something about the game keeps players coming back for more.



Top: Dean Grover plays Strikes and Spares. Grover makes the 80 mile drive from Strasburg once a week to play at the weekly pinball league and tournament. Bottom: The Family Guy game is one of the more modern pinball games located at Lyons Classic Pinball. The game place has more than 40 pinball games from the 1960s to 2000s. (Paul Litman)

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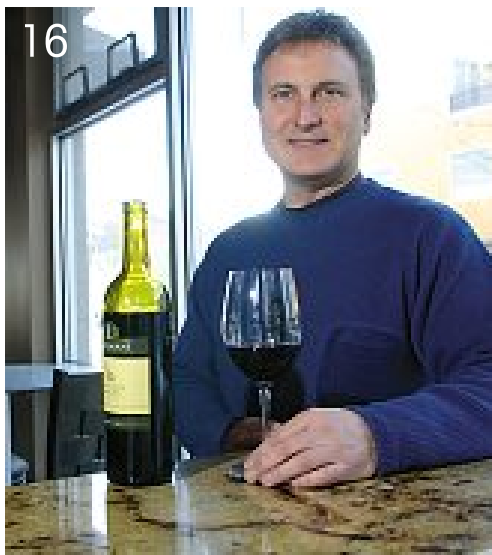
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**On the Cover**

Chef Deb Traylor has had a passion for cooking since she was young. Following in her inspiration to be just like Julia Child, Traylor enrolled in culinary school and is now the corporate chef for Mountain High Appliance in Louisville, BlueStar representative and demonstrator, Nutrition Services Training Chef for the St. Vrain Valley School District, a regular visitor and demonstrator at the Longmont Farmers' Market, Louisville Farmers' Market, Fort Collins Farmers' market and a private chef for many prominent families.

Photo by Paul Litman

Design by Trisha Allin



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