

## B-I-N-G-O, not just a song, but a form of entertainment

Written by Chris Lee

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“B-12, N-34, O-68 and I-19.” All combinations heard being called by Gene Hinck Sunday night, Jan. 10. Of course those combinations were BINGO numbers and roughly 38 people anxiously awaited for the numbers on their cards to be called.

Sunday night bingo at the Lions Den in Holyoke is a popular game every second and fourth Sunday of the month.

Lions Club member Larry Stein said there is an average of 34 people each night with most of them being regulars. Some people even travel from towns such as Imperial, Neb. and Julesburg to play. Participants sit for nearly two hours hoping they get the chance to yell BINGO and collect a little cash.

Approximately 11 games are played each night but it isn't your normal bingo. Every other game is a “special” as Stein called it. The “Luck Lady” was one of the games enjoyed by those present. Two “L's” had to be made on the BINGO card and if a woman got the first bingo, an extra \$5 was added to her winnings.

This particular night, three people called out BINGO at the same time during the “Luck Lady” game. Stein said they very rarely see three bingos at once. Two is a stretch, he added.

One BINGO only took eight numbers before someone yelled out they had won.

Other “specials” such as the 12:00 High, “Y” and Large Square were played. The final special of course was the blackout where each square on the card had to be covered.

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The aroma of popcorn filled the room as Leroy the “Bingo Popcorn Man” kept everyone’s bowl full all night long. Coffee and tea were also enjoyed by players.

Bingo is one of the main fund raisers for the Holyoke Lions Club. They also work the concession stand at the ball park during the summer months.

Proceeds from both fund raisers go toward a scholarship for a high school senior, the Fish Pond, Halloween costume party and Easter Egg hunt, among other things.

Nearly a year ago in February 2009, Lions Club members decided to begin a regular bingo night. One month later they purchased an electronic bingo board and station. The board keeps track of which numbers are called, how many numbers are called each game and displays the pattern of each “special.”

Stein said it takes about six members to work a normal bingo night to help it run smoothly. He also mentioned a game manager must be present each night. He serves as one of the managers who helps make sure everything is run correctly.

Before the games begin, one of the participants goes up to the table to look the balls over to make sure all are present.

Each winning card number is recorded and submitted to the state. Stein said they had to register all of their cards before they began holding games.

“G-58, B-1.” “BINGO!”

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