



## HARLEMLANES

---

*POSTED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES April 2, 2006*

*by Vincent M. Mallozzi*

### On 126th St., Harlem Lanes Opens Its Doors, and Alleys

Siri Cortez was celebrating her sixth birthday at Harlem Lanes yesterday when someone mentioned cake. She immediately put down her bowling ball and turned her back on two pins left standing at the end of the lane.

No worries, Siri thought, she could always pick up that spare next year.

"I'm coming here when I turn 7," she said with a huge grin. "I'll knock all those pins down when I come back."

Siri and the rest of her family joined the crowd yesterday at the official opening of Harlem Lanes, a 25,000-square-foot bowling alley and sports lounge on 126th Street at Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard.

It is the first bowling alley in Harlem since Lenox Lanes closed in the 1980's.

"I'm excited," said Gail Richards, who owns the new establishment with Sharon Joseph, her niece.

"After four and a half years in the making," Ms. Richards said, "It's like a new baby being born."

By the time the baby has its first birthday, a reservation to hold a party at Harlem Lanes might be hard to get.

"Our birthday parties are already booked through June," said Ms. Joseph, who was raised in Harlem and still lives there.

Ms. Richards, a clinical psychologist with the Board of Education, and Ms. Joseph, a former investment analyst, hatched the idea of bringing bowling back to their old neighborhood during a stroll through Harlem in October 2001.

"We had been thinking about investing in Harlem and were just going over the possibilities," said Ms. Richards, who now lives in Bronxville, in Westchester County.

"We wanted to open a business that we thought could be a vital part of the renaissance that is taking place in Harlem," she continued.

On that October day, Ms. Joseph mentioned that her sister, Tanya Joseph, an avid bowler who lives in Harlem, was annoyed at having to travel downtown to bowl in Manhattan, at Leisure Time Bowling in the Port Authority, Bowlmor Lanes on University Place or AMF Chelsea Piers Lanes.

"My sister always said that she wished there was a place closer to home where she and her friends could bowl," Ms. Joseph said. "So we started giving the idea of a bowling alley serious consideration."

Ms. Richards, who once owned *Ambiance*, a clothing store in Harlem, liked the idea. "Bowling is a very interactive activity," she said. "It's a sport that is not age- or gender-specific."

In the ensuing months, the women made frequent visits to the other Manhattan alleys, handing out questionnaires that asked people where they lived and how often they went bowling. The pair soon determined that many other people were in Tanya Joseph's bowling shoes.

"Those other alleys were filled with customers from Manhattan and the Bronx who also preferred to bowl much closer to home," Ms. Richards said. "That's all we needed to know."

Harlem Lanes was created with loans from the Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone, which is a federal economic development initiative, and the New York City Investment Fund, which is affiliated with the nonprofit Partnership for New York City, as well as financing from equity investors.

The facility, which the owners said cost \$4.7 million to develop, is on the third and fourth floors of the six-story Alhambra Ballroom building.

It has 24 lanes; a sports bar with large, flat-screen televisions, music and strobe lights; a dining menu; a room for private parties; an arcade room; and a nattily attired doorman.

"Harlem Lanes? Third floor," he tells visitors.

The alleys also include additional lounge space, which in late evening lends Harlem Lanes a touch of lovers' lane.

"Oh, yeah, you can find more than just bowling here," said Ms. Joseph, chuckling. "I would definitely say that Harlem Lanes is a good place for singles to meet."

"Not only is this a place where our Harlem neighbors can really get to know one another," she added, "but it is a Manhattan destination for all New Yorkers, and hopefully, for tourists as well."

#### **Harlem Lanes**

2110-2118 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd

3rd Floor

New York, NY 10027

T 212 678-BOWL

E [events@harlemlanes.com](mailto:events@harlemlanes.com)

[www.harlemlanes.com](http://www.harlemlanes.com)

---