



The Florida Chapter of The National Wrestling Hall of Fame and Museum

NEWSLETTER

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About the Florida Chapter

**The Florida Chapter for the National Wrestling Hall of Fame
was established in 2000.**

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In this issue

President's Corner - page 3

Upcoming Events - page 4

2018 Honorees - page 5

Spotlight on Alumni - page 7

Alumni in the Community - page 10

Dave Schultz and Tricia Saunders Awards - page 11

South Florida Girls Tournament results - page 12

Spring FAWA events - page 13

Coach's Corner - page 14

AmazonSmile - page 15

A Memory from Ira - page 16

In Memoriam



Debbie, Corey, and Chris Hixon during the Honors Weekend, August 2017.

The Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame extends our deepest sympathy and condolences to Chris Hixon's family and friends and to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School community.

The President's Corner

We are moving into our 18th year of Induction Ceremonies and I have to relay to you I never lose the exhilaration of the upcoming year. The anticipation starts in October, when our Board Members meet and plan for the upcoming year. This is followed by the excitement of our new inductees, and my favorite task, calling the new members the week before Christmas to congratulate them. The excitement in their voices is worth all the hundreds of hours we as a Board contribute, and the "thank you" I receive from each class member makes it all so gratifying. We have a great group of gentlemen being inducted this year and you are invited to join us for the celebration August 10-11, 2018.

It is the goal of the Florida Chapter to honor our Inductees who have dedicated their lives to the sport of wrestling to a sensational weekend of renewing relationships with family, friends, former wrestlers, and co-workers. It's not only an induction weekend, but also a reunion! Speaking personally, it is hard to express the wonderful feeling I have watching the elation in the inductees as they laugh, cry, tell stories, take group pictures, and overall beam with pleasure. I watch and know I helped make this happen and it has to be one of the most rewarding experiences in my life. I also want to thank our Alumni who annually come to support and honor their brothers in wrestling who are being inducted.

This year's class will be introduced to the wrestling community at Florida State Wrestling Championships on March 3rd. It is thrilling to watch 70-80 of our Alumni line up to greet the inductees as they proceed to center mat prior to the finals. Later in the spring we will be hoisting fund raisers to support their Hall of Fame Weekend (check schedule) and then in August, our induction weekend.

The National Hall of Fame is encouraging State Chapters to help encourage and grow Girls Wrestling in each state. Our Chapter is moving forward to help in the development of clubs for girls wrestling. We have coaches that have shown an interest in getting involved. If you would like to help in this area, please contact me at gltownsend@bellsouth.net. We are currently

working with the National Hall by submitting some of the top ranked girls in Florida to the National office for the ranking.

Our Chapter has also moved forward this year by adding a Media Department headed up by Bob Thomas along with Cecelia and Alan Solomon. We are updating our website, expanding the newsletter, and employing other areas of communication. We welcome you to send us articles of interest pertaining to wrestling, coaches, officials, and wrestlers.

It is an honor for myself, my wife and our Board to serve the Florida Wrestling Community

Remember, when we do it, we do it with class, for we are honoring the best of the best.

Gary Townsend

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 2-3 - State Wrestling Tournament
Kissimmee, FL

The NWHOF Florida Chapter Class of 2018 will be introduced before the Championship Finals

SAVE THE DATES!

May 5 - Annual Clay Shoot
Quail Creek Lodge, Okeechobee, FL

August 10-11 – Honors Weekend
Wyndham Lake Buena Vista, Disney Springs, FL

Check the website for more information:

<http://nwhof.org/florida/2018/02/12/honors-weekend-2018/>



Class of 2018

Lifetime Service Award

Given in recognition of years of dedication to the development of leadership and citizenship in the youth through the sport of wrestling.

Bill Mackey, Official, West Palm Beach

Frank Drake, Coach, Fort Meyers

Mike Crowder, Coach, Tallahassee

Pete Meyers, Coach, Miami

Albert Pardo, Coach, Miami

Moises Rivera, Coach, Miami

"Outstanding American" Award

Given to former wrestlers who are highly successful and use the disciplines learned in wrestling in their profession.

Gerald Brisco, Tarpon Springs

John & Helen Vaughn Award

This prestigious chapter award was created to acknowledge those deserving individuals who otherwise may not receive recognition for their profound contribution to the sport of amateur wrestling in the state.

Craig Thomas (posthumously)

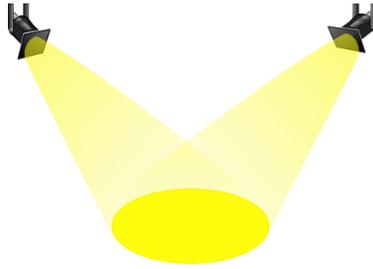
Congratulations!



Harriette Weller Class of 2000

Harriette is enjoying life! She spoke with Alan Solomon (Class of 2016) and had these updates for us:

- Besides her own children, she has loved watching her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and her great-great-grandchildren participate in sports;
- Her hobbies are needlecraft and quilting. Harriette belongs to a quilting guild that gives back to their community through donations of their handcrafts to needy children;
- Harriette has a full-time companion, a black lab named Katie;
- She occasionally sees some of her son's former wrestlers;
- She has been a widow for 14 years, still lives in Pinellas County, and looking forward to her 83rd birthday this summer!

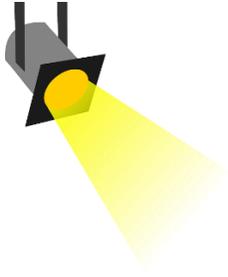


Johnny Rouse

Class of 2001

Johnny is an inspiration for us! He spoke with Alan Solomon recently and had these updates to share:

- He had a stroke in June 2013. Jane, his wife, retired to help him;
- In 2014, they moved from Orange County to family land on the Suwannee river in Dixie County;
- Although he uses a wheelchair or walker, Johnny lifts weights for exercise 90 minutes a day. Light weights and lots of reps!;
- He watches TV to keep up with the world;
- The Rouse household includes two Australian Shepherds and four cats including a Maine Coon and a stray kitten that arrived during Hurricane Irma;
- Many former UCF wrestlers keep in touch. Johnny said he had 12 messages waiting for him to return from the last few days;
- Johnny just attended the Metro Conference Tournament at Windemere HS. The coach is a former wrestler of his, a four-time national placer. John was also able to visit with other former wrestlers at the tournament.



John Heyman Class of 2002



John is a babysitting grandpa and loving it! He too recently spoke with Alan Solomon and had these updates for to pass on:

- John has three grandchildren - one in college, one in high school, and one in elementary;
- He is active with the West Coast Officials Association as the Match Assigner for the group. John gave up officiating the high school season last year after an injury slowed him down, but still officiates state, regional, and national freestyle tournaments;
- John is on the Executive Board of the United States Wrestling Officials Association where one of his duties is the Officials Education program;
- During the summer, John and his wife De (Class of 2010) travel to attend various freestyle tournaments around the U.S.;
- In his free time he enjoys golfing;
- He still lives in Hillsborough County.

Alumni in the Community

The Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame is proud of our alumni and their continued contribution to their communities. On February 11, 2018, three alumni gave up their Sunday to organize and run (Jim Bird, 2010) and officiate (Rick Tribit, 2008, and Alan Solomon, 2016) a tournament for kids, the future of the sport.

Some wrestling action from the tournament:



Attention Wrestling Community:

Nominate a deserving wrestler!

The **Dave Schultz High School Excellence Award** (boy) and the **Tricia Saunders High School Excellence Award** (girl) are presented annually to high school seniors based equally on outstanding wrestling success, scholastic achievement and citizenship or community service. Winners are chosen at the state and regional levels with the national winner being named at the Wrestling Hall of Fame's Honors Weekend each summer.

If you have a nominee for either of these prestigious awards, please contact Pete Collins at petecollins52@gmail.com.

CONGRATULATIONS

First Ever State Dual Meet Winners

1A Lake Highlands Prep

2A Lake Gibson

3A South Dade

South Florida Girls Wrestling Tournament Results

1/6/18

Participating Schools:

Bartram Trail, Booker T. Washington, Coral Springs, Deerfield Beach, Hialeah Miami Lakes, Mater Academy, McArthur, Miami Beach, Miami Jackson, Miramar, Monsignor Pace, Naples, North Miami, Olympic Heights, Plantation, Somerset, Stranahan, Taravella

97 – 106

1. Jasmine Godinez (HML), 2. Joanalicia Ramirez (Str), 3. Ashley Jeudy (Mir), 4. Marine Josephine McA)

115 – 120

1. Melissa Avila (Tar), 2. Izzy Velez (Tar), 3. Skyler Abruscatti (McA), 4. Jessika Rosado (McA)

125

1. Carolyn Bellon (MP), 2. Leidaly Rivera (OH), 3. Courtney Solomon (BTW), 4. Yelin Montes (MJ)

131 – 135

1. Talia Megas (BT), 2. Yohanni Costa (OH), 3. Chrismene Petion (NM), 4. Ashley Battle (BTW)

140 – 146

1. Hanna Costa (OH), 2. Lindsey Victorin (CS), 3. Matnesha Jones (DB), 4. Makyra Bianchi (N)

151- 154

1. Stephanie Villalobos (MA), 2. Ashley Santos (MB), 3. Akira Collins (Plant)

160 – 166

1. Mia Liu (Som), 2. Nicole Marin (OH), 3. Madison Perez (CS), 4. Lydia Pierce (McA)

175 – 176

1. Kenisha Jacsaint (OH), 2. Shelsy Renous (NM)

220

1. Chelsea Guillaume (NM), 2. Aaliyah Sherrier (Tar)

285

1. Mary Rodriguez (MJ), 2. Amber Ellis (CS)

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL GIRLS
THAT PARTICIPATED**

Coaches Corner

The Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame would like to recognize Coach Mike Palazzo of Lake Highland Prep.

Coach Palazzo originally hails from Illinois where he wrestled at Glenbard North H.S. and won the state championship in 1989. He went on to wrestle for Indiana University, lettering all four years and qualifying for the NCAA D1 National Tournament.



Since taking over the program in 2008, Coach Palazzo has built Lake Highland Prep into a nationally ranked powerhouse. It only took four short years for Coach Palazzo and LHP to capture its first state championship in 2013. Since then the team has also won three straight state 1A titles in 2015, 2016 and 2017. This season LHP won the first 1A Dual State title. Mike Palazzo has coached 35 individual state champions and 47 place winners. Thirty-eight of his wrestlers were honored as NHSCA All Americans.

Coach Palazzo has taken LHP to a higher level competing in the toughest high school tournaments. This season the team has competed in “The Ironman” in Ohio, “The Beast of the East” in Delaware, and “The Powerade” in Pennsylvania. With strong finishes in these tournaments, Lake Highland Prep is presently ranked #6 in the country.

In recognition of his achievements, Coach Palazzo has been recognized as “Coach of the Year” by several organizations:

Florida Dairy Farmers Coach of the Year - 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016 and 2017

National Wrestling Coaches Association - 2012

Flo Wrestling – 2016

Orlando Sentinel All Sports Coach of the Year - 2016

National High School Coaches Association - 2017

The Florida Chapter of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame congratulates Coach Palazzo, his team and Lake Highland Prep for their many accomplishments.

Spring 2018

FAWA Schedule

2018 Florida USA Wrestling Folkstyle State Championships

- OSCEOLA HIGH SCHOOL, 420 S THACKER AVE., KISSIMMEE, FL 34741
 - **Friday, March 9th** - Weigh Ins 4:00pm EST - 8:00pm EST
 - **Saturday, March 10th** – Rookie, JV, and Women
 - **Sunday, March 11th** – Bantam through Open/Veteran Divisions 📅

2018 Father Devine National Team Qualifier

- OSCEOLA HIGH SCHOOL, 420 S THACKER AVE., KISSIMMEE, FL 34741
 - **Friday, April 20** - Weigh Ins 5:00pm EDT - 8:00pm EDT
 - **Saturday, April 21** - 7:00am EDT - 8:00pm EDT
 - **Sunday, April 22** - 7:00am EDT - 8:00pm EDT

2018 Florida USA Wrestling Freestyle & Greco State Championships plus Folkstyle Ironman 📅

- OSCEOLA HIGH SCHOOL, 420 S THACKER AVE., KISSIMMEE, FL 34741
 - **Friday, May 4th** - Weigh Ins 5:00pm EDT - 8:00pm EDT
 - **Saturday, May 5th** - 7:00am EDT - 8:00pm EDT
 - **Sunday, May 6th** - 7:00am EDT - 8:00pm EDT



VISIT

WEBSITE

<http://nwhof.org/florida/>



ON FACEBOOK

<https://www.facebook.com/NationalWrestlingHallOfFameFloridaChapter/>

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Which products on AmazonSmile are eligible for charitable donations?

Tens of millions of products on AmazonSmile are eligible for donations. You will see eligible products marked "Eligible for AmazonSmile donation" on their product detail pages. Recurring Subscribe-and-Save purchases and subscription renewals are not currently eligible.

Can I use my existing Amazon.com account on AmazonSmile?

Yes, you use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same.

How do I select a charitable organization to support when shopping on AmazonSmile?

On your first visit to AmazonSmile smile.amazon.com, you need to select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping.

This is where you select the National Wrestling Hall of Fame Inc.

AmazonSmile will remember your selection, and then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a donation.

It's that easy!

My Memories of Great Matches Involving Florida Wrestlers
by Ira Fleckman, Contributing Writer

**Mandy Blanco, Countryside VS Andy Anderson, Miami-Norland
FHSAA State Championship 1987**

This match was between two really great Florida lightweights. In many ways these two were similar and would have been great friends if they had attended the same school.

I guess I knew Mandy Blanco longer as I had seen him wrestle freestyle at various tournaments over the years. I got to know Mandy after the match as he made the Florida Junior National team and I got to hang out with Mandy and his buddy, Frank Matthews, another Countryside product. Mandy was built solidly, he had plenty of muscle power but he was also technically well-schooled. His coach, David Frayer, had certainly provided Mandy the technical skills to wrestle. Mandy was smart on the mat and usually in good shape. He could be explosive but he didn't take too many risks in the big matches. He had a great sense of humor and could do an entire comedy talk based on the words "residue" and "chemicals".

I was the new coach at Miami-Norland High School, a school that was pretty evenly racially divided with a good number of the blacks from the Islands of the Caribbean. The wrestling team had only four upper classmen and two left the team leaving me with Andy at 112 and the other wrestler, who also made it to state was at 220. The rest of the team was made up of underclassmen and was very inexperienced. With this fact in mind, I held Saturday practices and encouraged the wrestlers to participate in every wrestling tournament held prior to the start of the regular high school season. Andy very quickly established himself as the team leader.

Andy Anderson was an excellent wrestler when I arrived at Norland as wrestling coach. When I found out that Andy's dad was in the merchant marine, Andy became Admiral. As head coach, I have always exercised the authority over nicknames and promotions.

Andy was a leader by example. He worked hard and did all that was asked. He was built for speed and quickness but he didn't lack anything in the muscle department either. If I had to compare him to another Florida lightweight, I would have to say he was as close to George Citron of Wellington as any other Florida wrestler. Andy had a great sense of humor, too.

It is my considered opinion that one of the problems that Miami area wrestlers face is that they don't travel too much. I have always believed that was a disadvantage. At the FHSAA State Tournament, Miami wrestlers always have to be far away from home, so I made it my business to travel with my Norland team.

Driving up from Miami with my station wagon loaded with a crew of young wrestlers, many who had never been north of the Broward County line, was more than a long trip. I am sure that my mostly young and black team wasn't sure of the

reception that awaited them once out of the friendly urban confines and into rural Florida.

We were on the way to Auburndale for a FAWA tournament and Andy asked to use my CB radio. I don't believe we violated any federal communication laws but, if we did, it was worth it. Andy had several CB radio personas. He spoke with a very southern accent, knew all the codes and made the truckers crazy. His best joke was to make himself sound like a very young lady in need of a ride. I know it was probably not right but I had a hard time driving with tears and laughing so hard. Andy got propositioned several times and he could really string the truckers along.

Andy asked me about what weight class he should compete at and I suggested that he compete where he felt comfortable. I can't remember but one of the other Miami schools had a great 112 and Andy wasn't too sure he could beat the youngster. I wasn't sure Andy could beat the better wrestlers at 220 but I doubted that anyone at 112 could beat him.

Andy didn't have the technical skills or the mat skills of a wrestler who had come up through a Kids program. I don't believe he began his wrestling career until Jr. HS or even HS but he was certainly gifted in the athletic ability department. As his coach, I attempted to limit his mat experiments and sort of limit him to traditional wrestling moves. However, during matches, Andy could do some really strange moves but he always seemed to come out points ahead. Andy managed to win the GMAC, which I always felt was the best tournament in the state next to the Sunshine Open. He was ready for prime time.

When it was determined that Admiral Andy Anderson and Mandy Blanco would meet in the finals, I wanted to keep the confidence of my wrestler high, but I knew that Mandy was better coached and better prepared to score points. I believed that in a brawl, a physical contest where technique was secondary, Andy would be able to muscle Mandy. However, my instructions over the year had been too good. Andy had been a super student. Andy wrestled with total poise. Mandy scored first. Andy and Mandy did mix it up but both wrestlers tried to out wrestle one another. The final score was 5-4. The match was close and at any time either wrestler looked like they could score on a big move. However, neither one could dominate the other. Mandy had the 5 and Andy had the 4.

Andy took the loss hard. As a coach, I was very pleased with Andy's efforts. He wrestled beautifully. I still believe that in a more wide-open contest he might have had an advantage, but then again, Mandy wasn't a pushover.

I haven't seen Admiral Andy Anderson since I left Norland but I expect he is doing well. He was intelligent, hard-working and disciplined.

I haven't seen or heard from or about Mandy since the Junior Nationals, however he is another fine young man who I have confidence can meet and beat life's problems.

I will never forget either young man nor the great match they had.