

wrestling

FOR A RETURN TO GLORY

An idea turned into a movement and is now close to completion: bringing back the Purple Gang

By Michele Tinker, Director of Annual Giving

An idea born out of a homecoming Areunion is now gaining impetus: Bring back the Purple Gang.

At the wrestling reunion held at Homecoming 2009, inquiries about restarting DC's wrestling program were presented to President Mark C. Gordon. President Gordon in turn issued a challenge to the wrestlers: Raise the funds to meet the first three years of operational costs of wrestling as a club sport. If the program is popular and leads to increased student recruitment and retention, the college will make the wrestling club a permanent addition to the operating budget.

Bob Rote '73 was an organizer for the wrestling reunion. Bob wrestled his entire time at DC and says modestly, "We won more matches than we lost." He is eager to see wrestling back at DC for several reasons: Not only is wrestling a good form

of competition, it's good conditioning for football players, and he points to one of DC's most distinguished football athletes, Ben Davis, who also wrestled while at Defiance. Bob, fellow wrestling alumni Carl Busnick '77 and Deryll Rohda '77 are spearheading the drive to raise \$73,000 over the next 30 months to bring back the Purple Gang.

Carl Busnick credits wrestling for having a huge impact on his life. He lost both parents when he was a youth, so it was his coaches that he looked to for guidance. "Wrestling has helped me with everything I've done with my life. Athletics helps teach kids more than what you learn in the classroom: discipline, teamwork. You are part of a team, you have rules, this helps you become a responsible

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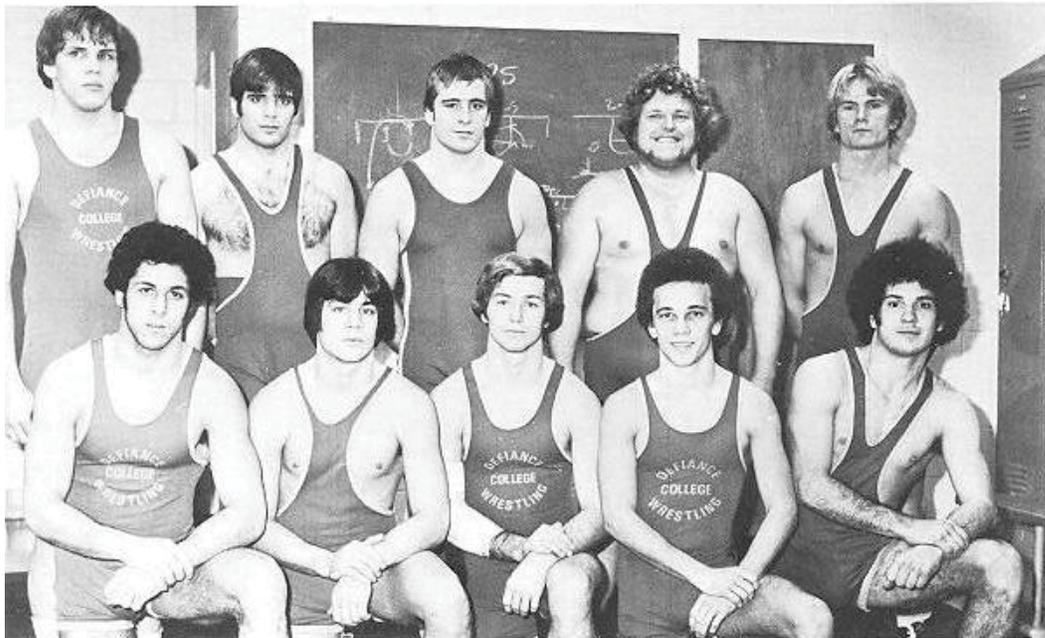
-- Carl Busnick '77,
Purple Gang Supporter

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Busnick believes that with the popularity of wrestling in Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania, reintroducing the sport to DC will be a huge draw for students from these states. "A lot of kids want to continue their wrestling (at the college level). It's so competitive, the kids are so good." He also notes that DC's strong wrestling program generated a large number of men who went on to coach wrestling at the high school level.

Former DC coach Wally Neel was at the wrestling reunion and is very enthusiastic about returning wrestling to Defiance. His first head coaching position was with DC wrestling in 1967. He remembers that was the first year that wrestling was a varsity sport at Defiance. "We had a very good three years," Neel says of his time at Defiance. Since the wrestlers didn't have their own space, they were at the mercy of the basketball team, waiting to use the gym after basketball practice or games.

Wrestling alumni have set a goal of bringing in enough pledges so a new wrestling club can be announced at Homecoming in early October. To contribute to this effort, contact Dave Plant, director of alumni and parent relations, at dplant@defiance.edu or 419-783-2572. ♦



Team members include: Row 1 (L-R): Paul Perialas, Chris Krebs, Dave Daugherty, Dan Sprague, Frank Turano. Row 2: Bob Beindorf, Matt Nautel, Mitch Nautel, Randy Harner, Jerry Bowser. Absent: Kevin Hennessey, Rich O'Donnell, John Vaccani.