

NWHS State Champion Cheerleaders honored with new signs

Written by Janna Ross

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Oh, what a ride.

The New Washington High School cheerleaders have enjoyed an amazing ride the last two seasons with their 2008 season ending with the ultimate, magical moment- being named State Champions.

The Mustang Cheerleaders set a goal, a lofty goal, one that had never been accomplished before for a team from New Washington. Their goal was to bring back a state championship title to the small town.

The squad competed on November 8 in the Indiana Cheerleading Championships sponsored by the Indiana Association of School Principals. The competition is the only opportunity for a high school cheer squad to win a regional or state title and is equivalent to the basketball programs sectional, regional, etc.

The squad's hard work and dedication paid off as they now have the memories of being on a state championship squad.

The cheerleaders had two minutes and 30 seconds to show the judges everything they had. During that small amount of time the girls nailed the routine and as the teams were called for their placements in the competition, they soon realized they made history. The squad won the school's first ever state championship title.

Directly after returning from their victorious outing at the state level, the squad immediately began preparing for the Mustangs basketball seasons.

The varsity cheerleaders include: Sam Callis, Kasey Curry, Tessa Stoner, Sami Vest, Chantel Hammond, Madison Tuell, Kasey Gill, Erica Reis, Rebecca Wolfley and Brittany Kemper. Coach Emily Oliver-Jones was honored to be named Indiana High School Coach of the Year. The assistant coach of the team is Stephanie Brison.

While the girls were seen cheering on their team and leading the Mustang faithful throughout the basketball season, there was another surprise developing for the squad.

The squad kept the crowd energized as they were being recognized. The girls enjoyed a presentation of the State Championship trophy and banner. The girls were also surprised by another sign.

Motorists traveling along Highway 62 through New Washington may have noticed two new, rather large, signs pop up on Friday morning, March 6.

The signs, 48"x36", became reality during the last home ballgame when Clark County President Dave Abbott, along with Clark County Sheriff Danny Rodden and Joe Webb helped present the signs to the squad and the community. During the ballgame, was the first time the girls seen the signs.

"I was able to see the signs before the squad did. My jaw dropped! I wasn't expecting them to be so big! It was like a billboard. The girls' reaction to the signs was priceless. They were wide-eyed and had their jaws drop just like I did. They first saw the signs at the home ball game when they were revealed during the presentation of the signs, trophy and banner," Oliver-Jones stated.

The signs becoming a reality was a group effort.

Abbott was approached by a concerned parent about recognizing the squad and knew he wanted to help in any way he could.

"A parent approached me and just wanted to know if there was anything that I could do. I then started to make a few phone calls to see what direction we could go," Abbott recalled.

He continued, "The first person I called was Joe Webb and asked him for his help. Then I called Danny (Rodden) to see if he could help with the financial part of the sign and then I called

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Monty (Snelling) because I thought he could help with the painting of the signs. All three were quick to agree to help recognize the squad.”

Webb volunteered his time while Rodden donated the money to purchase the signs. Snelling then arranged for the signs to be painted.

The four worked well as a team as the signs became a beautiful reality for the girls.

Oliver-Jones believes the signs were important for the squad and her.

“The signs are a constant reminder to not only me but the cheerleaders of the dedication, determination and discipline that we have instilled in the New Washington cheerleading program over the past years. They are so much more than a ‘sign.’ They represent the ongoing support that we have received from Clark County, Greater Clark County Schools and our New Washington community,” Oliver-Jones added. “Nothing can be successful without support and that is one thing that our cheerleading program has always been blessed with. The signs are not just for the girls that won the title, the signs are for all the supporters who helped us achieve the success we have achieved today!”

Oliver-Jones was quick to thank those who helped make the signs a reality for the community, squad and herself.

“I have to say a huge thank you to Dave Abbott, Joe Webb and Sheriff Rodden for all the time and effort they put into getting the signs made, donated, presented and hung. The cheerleaders and I greatly appreciate what they have done for us,” Oliver-Jones stated.

Abbott also wanted to thank some people who he thought played an important role.

“I want to thank Joe Webb, Monty Snelling and Sheriff Danny Rodden for their efforts in getting the signs prepared. I want to also thank New Washington Principal Ben Ledbetter for allowing us to make the presentation at the school. And, of course I want to thank, and again congratulate, the girls and Coach Oliver-Jones for accomplishing their goal and allowing the community to be a part of their memories,” Abbott stated. “The squad made the community very proud. They always have the fans pumped and ready for the ballgames. They are making memories that will last them a lifetime.”

The signs were installed on Friday morning by Abbott and Webb. New Washington Hardware donated the hardware to install the signs.

“I also want to recognize Rick Smith, the manager of New Washington Hardware, for the donation of the hardware,” Abbott added.

Abbott, who is a 1977 graduate of New Washington High School, was excited about helping his alma mater, where he was a member of the basketball team.

“I am just glad I was able to help make a memory for the girls and the community. The signs are a tribute to the girls’ hard work and dedication that will be there for future generations to see,” Abbott stated. “This was just one way I could give back to the community in which I grew up in.”