

WHEATON MAJORETTES

53rd ANNIVERSARY

2012

The Wheaton Majorettes Story

Evelyn D'Anna founded the corps in 1959, with Kathleen (D'Anna) Doughtery as the instructor and leader. For several years, the corps marched in parades year-round and in all parts of Maryland, the District of Columbia, West Virginia and Virginia. The group had twirlers, color guard, and drummers in those days!

By 1967, Wheaton was ready to compete in the big time. Special drum and color guard instructors, Bill Semenak and Georgia Bridgemann, were hired on staff, and at the 1969 National Championships in Syracuse, New York, Wheaton won two World National titles. It was truly a Cinderella story (ask anyone who was part of the corps back then)! Wheaton repeated Nationals in 1970, 1971, and 1972 with much success and championship titles as the location moved to its present home, Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana. The corps won every honor and competition that there was for four consecutive years.

It was a lot of hard work to keep Wheaton on top, and the entire family played a role in the organization. Kathy trained the twirlers with the help of Vicky, who was the senior leader. Mike, the oldest son, traveled with the drummers, especially on Wheaton overnights (there were lots of them). Paul was also a member of the National Champion Drum Line that Wheaton boasted about for several years. Ann Marie usually managed to get in the way, and Mr. and Mrs. "D", as they are still known today, had a house full of kids-all the time. It's amazing that the house never caved in, especially, with drum practice held twice weekly in the basement.

Rebuilding was something that hadn't been invented yet, and in 1972, after Nationals, nearly everyone in the now-Senior corps graduated and went away to college (including Vicky). But, we were nine members strong, all Ann Marie's age, and we refused to "fold". As a matter of fact, we made it to Nationals and placed 13th out of 13 in the newly developed dance twirl team category. In 1974, we grew some and improved a lot, returning to the top 10 in two dance twirl team events.

1975 was a turning point year. Wheaton teamed up with a very talented color guard from Southern Maryland and produced a show production based on a Russian theme. We were proud of our efforts and surprised ourselves by placing third at Nationals in this new event for Wheaton. (Vicky Casseen was five years old at the time and did a saber dance in the show). Money was tight we drove to Nationals in a school bus (no air conditioning) and stayed seven to a room. It was a memorable time!

During 1976, we had been building a drum line and color guard of our own and preformed at Nationals in parade corps, as well as drum and guard ensemble. The dance twirls continued to place in the top five on the National level. Ann Marie began teaching this year.

1977 was a very special year for Wheaton. Although we had always won a dance twirl team title at State, this year was awesome! Our T-shirts said, "We Won It All!", and we did! Seven titles! The momentum for a National title was strong -and "China Grove" succeeded in making thirteen girls from Rockville champions! It was an excitement this group of twirlers had never known, and for those of us who remembered what winning felt like, it was a magical return to the past.

From 1978 to 1981, Wheaton maintained a reputation as a top dance twirl team, always representing our state at Nationals and placing top five consistently. We continued to rebuild. While Ann Marie was dancing professionally in California and Pittsburgh, Vicky was completing her medical education and

working full-time, and Kathy was raising a family of our girls, Mr. and Mrs. "D" made a decision to retire the drum line. The corps would now consist of twirlers only.

The corps had grown in numbers, and we took on show production again, "Babes on Broadway" in 1982. It was a learning experience for all of us and a long, hard year in twirling for Wheaton. We made a respectable showing at Nationals (in purple tennis shoes). But the most fun was performing at the World's Fair in Knoxville, Tennessee.

It was only a matter of time before another National Championship title was realized, and in 1983, our Juvenile team (Steph Cohen, Kelli Andre, Sandy Frank, Kelly Dougherty, Deanna Dougherty and Tina Goldstein) came through with flying colors (they were babies)!

Our show production corps, "The Wiz", was a step above the previous year's "Babes", with a noted increase in difficulty and marching and maneuvering, which was a major caption on the score sheet at the time. The sets were so nice that they were copied nearly identically the following year by another corp! Mike D'Anna, now a drama director at Magruder High School, became involved with the corp in a new way creating and producing sets.

Another highlight of the 1983 season was Spain. Wheaton was invited and preformed in fourteen cities on a two week tour of Southern Spain. It was the perfect way to end the summer and have a fun-filled vacation all at the same time!

The year was 1985. Our bus driver, L.C, took us on our first trip to Chicago (without directions) for the Chicagoland competition. McDonald's in Naperville was stunned by our 6:00 a.m. appearance. "Alice in Wonderland" was a totally new concept that we brought to show production. Our characters spoke in mime - they had definite personalities. It was our best effort yet. Wheaton won the theme award that year at Nationals, as dance twirls continued to place top five.

We began 1986 with the question of "Who could replace Heather Hopkins as Alice?" Our blond leading lady moved to Alabama. She promised, however, to return in July to play her role. We decided to try the trip to Chicagoland again (after all, it was better than practicing all day in Niles, Michigan!). The corps was awarded the prestigious Chicagoland plaque as the Corps of the Year. Thrilled by the success, the girls stormed into Nationals and after some coaching calculations, won the Senior Small Twirling Corps Championship. That USA National title qualified our corp to compete in its first Grand National Championship finals since 1972. The girls looked terrified, but were proud to be part of the "Corps Night".

Coming home with our new theme in mind, "Clue," 1987 was destined to be a year for major choreography in both show corps and dance twirl teams. The costumes and sets were not completed in time for our first parent performance, so we scheduled a second this show was so complex! With the help of Burt Cohen and David Burd at radio station Q1 07, we had the voice -over added to the tape less than a week before Nationals. The plot kept changing with each practice, but finally it was settled -Mr. Green did it!

Chicagoland was scheduled once more and the show was very well received by the judges. Our new dance twirl, "I Do," looked super and promised to be among the best. Nationals was both exciting and frustrating. Our girls were wonderful throughout the week. The show did not win as we thought it might have, but the directors of "Corps Night" asked Wheaton to perform in exhibition. We were honored and turned in another spectacular performance. The Audrey McWhorter Award was presented to our corps. It was nice to be recognized as one of the top corps at Nationals. The same night, "I Do" won the

preliminary competition at the dance twirl team contest. Sports Illustrated promised a two page layout in an "upcoming issue", and we were obligated to be on the Notre Dame Football field at 6:00 am for pictures the next morning! UGH -and to think... we still haven't seen those photos! Late in the week, a special surprise was announced at the World National Grand Championship Dance Twirl competition. (This was our first year to have team finals.) Six "Dynasty" Awards were created for this event. The D'Anna family was honored by having one of the traveling trophies awarded in their name. Then, at the finals, our three competitive teams placed top 5 in their divisions. It was a long week!

1988 brought performances at the University of Maryland (half-time basketball) for the fourth consecutive year and Catholic University. We won the Maryland State Grand Championship Team (plus \$200) for the second year in a row (it had only been in existence for two years). "Clue" was being perfected, and Mr. William's generously donated his time and skills to construct our new sets. Rob Kark returned to be the artistic talent behind our newly designed and produced backgrounds. Colleen was Professor Plum, Juti was Mrs. White, and Denise played Miss Peacock.

Once again, our itinerary took us to Chicagoland where we won "Corps of the Year" title. Nationals was a dream come true, the culmination of months of work -Wheaton won the Show Production title for the Large category on Thursday night, and on Friday captured the first Grand National Championship title Wheaton had won since 1972. Mrs. D'Anna was on hand to accept the little brown jug!

In 1989, with most of the Senior corps graduating again, the concentration shifted to rebuilding from the ground level. We returned to Nationals and won the Tiny Tot Extra Large Dance Twirl title with "Lollipop", and were thrilled to have made a strong showing despite the relatively "green" status of our members. It also saw the feeder program working to supply our team with new talent. Colleen and Juli became full-time staff.

By 1990, the Junior/Senior team had changed full swing, and with the new dance twirl, "Let It Roll", our team was competitive once more. The Tiny *Tot* Juvenile team was busy growing up, too! Maryland State was rough that year, and we got beat really bad ... but the kids worked hard all summer and won four major dance twirl titles at Nationals "Let It Roll" Small and Large, "Lollipop" (for the second time), and "Forever Your Girl"! Wheaton had its first Little Miss Majorette of America, Whitney Whittaker! It was an emotional finale we thought we would never, top! Until ..

1991! What an incredible year! We were missing the excitement of real corps competition, so we decided to try our hand at a "Show" once again. "Indiana Jones" was dreamed up by Kathy and carried out all year in a plot and story line that will always be remembered at AYOP. (Of course, the show wasn't completed until the day of the parent performance). Wheaton won the Maryland State Championship, \$300, and then traveled to Chicagoland for a warm-up. We received favorable reviews from everyone. By the time Thursday night came, enthusiasm was high. The kids had a super 5-drop preliminary performance that gave them access to Grand Nationals on Friday. Another great job, and another Grand National title for Wheaton. But we had Saturday dance twirl team finals to get through yet. By the end of AYOP 1991, Wheaton was rich in Dynasty Awards. We won five dance twirl titles, sweeping the Tiny Tot division, as well as Junior and Senior Extra Large. Our greatest job was finally winning the D'Anna Dynasty Award (we had been second to the Canadians for three years in a row). Denise placed top six, and another Wheaton Little Miss Majorette of America, Shelby Orndoff, was crowned. As with the previous years, August was spent wondering how we could ever top 1991!

With 1992 came a whole new look for Wheaton. We began to develop a style in dance twirls, as well as a new effort, Juvenile Twirling Corps. We expanded our national team to give experience to the newer

members by adding a Beginner Juvenile Team. Maryland State was truly spectacular, with Wheaton winning back our traveling trophy, \$500 cash, and taking eleven dance twirl team titles. We welcomed Brian McCormack and Brian Billings to our staff as show designers.

Nationals was the best ever! Wheaton won a total of 9 Dynasty A wards, including the D'Anna Dynasty for the second year in a row and the Extra Large Tiny Tot Dance twirl for the fourth consecutive year! The Juvenile Twirling Corps, "Where the Wild Things Are", won high honors, but came in second place by less than one point! It was a great show and well received. Where did the staff go after such a successful Nationals? Disney World! We wished we could have taken the kids, too!

1993 saw many rule changes that affected our structure and took some getting used to. The Extra Large divisions were eliminated this year; and, therefore, focus on corps events had become more of a priority. It was our first attempt at bringing two full-length shows to Nationals, plus all of the dance twirls and twirling teams. Juvenile corps repeated "Where the Wild Things Are". The Senior show was "Aladdin".

Maryland State was once again a very competitive event. Wheaton won five of eight advanced dance twirls and two beginner dance twirls (the newest category change). Nationals was nearly a repeat of the previous year, with Wheaton again winning nine Dynasty Awards, including the D'Anna Dynasty Trophy and the Audrey McWhorter Cup. Whitney Whittaker won Juvenile Miss Majorette of America and Denise D'Anna appeared in her last "top 6" finals competition of her career. Congratulations!

With 1994 came two new full-length shows -"MTV" (Junior Twirling Corps) and "The Nutcracker" (Juvenile Twirling Corps). Maryland State wins included the Tiny Tot and Juvenile traveling trophies. "Coppelia", the Juvenile team dance twirl won Maryland's highest honor as the overall Maryland State Dance Twirl Champions! We collected five of eight advanced dance twirl awards, two beginner twirling awards, and \$300 cash.

At Nationals, "MTV" won the Grand World Twirling Corps title, the first time ever for Wheaton! After winning our first Juvenile Twirling Corps championship title, "The Nutcracker" placed third in the toughest division of the final round of the Grand World Championships! The dance twirls were equally awesome! Wheaton won 7 out of 8 Tiny Tot! Juvenile Dynasty Awards for dance twirls and twirling teams, including the D'Anna Dynasty Award! The Junior/ Senior teams won two Dynasty Awards, including the honor of high point dance twirl team, which earned an appearance in the Big Show for "Firebird".

1995! Maryland State this year was a complete success. Wheaton captured the Tiny Tot, Juvenile, Junior and Senior Traveling Trophies, as well as overall Maryland State Dance Twirl Champion and \$500 in cash awards. Nationals was too good to be true! Wheatons Juvies backed up their Twirling Corps title from last year, winning again with "Fantasia". The Junior Senior Twirling Corps defiantly "Rocked" the USA with their salute to the Red, White and Blue! The dance twirl divisions were dominated by our teams, with Wheaton earning six of the eight Dynasty Awards. The twirling teams were just as awesome. Five out of eight Dynasty Awards made their way home with Wheaton. The Tiny Tot! Juvenile teams made a full sweep of their division! To top it off, the Senior dance twirl routine "Vivaldi", was selected by the judges to represent the United States at the World Championships in Milan, Italy. That honor would result in months of planning and hard work. Wheaton was also honored to be recognized as having the "Corps Director of the Year".

We were astonished, however, by the success of our individual twirlers at AYOP. The World qualifying year saw Wheaton with the most soloist from any corps in the country! Missy Weygand, Whitney Whittaker, Melissa Baas, Danielle Crabb, and Brittany Ecalono all earned a place on Team USA. Best of all, we watched

as three of our own were crowned into Miss Majorette of America royalty -Brittany Ecalono (Juvenile), Missy Weygand (Junior), and, for a third time (in advanced), Whitney Whittaker (Pre-Teen). Unbelievable!

1996 started off early and has been a busy year at that! We took twenty-five girls to Orlando, Florida, for a competition at Universal Studios. It was a cold but fun weekend of theme parks, thrill rides, and twirling, too! At Eastern Regionals, we were proud of Mrs. "D" (momma D) as she was presented and "Eastie" award for the development of baton twirling.

The Senior Team was hard at work preparing for the World Championships in April. We went to every competition everywhere because it was the "best practice we could possibly have". The best part of the pre-World events was our twenty seconds of fame on the Today Show with Willard Scott.

The World Championships in Milan, Italy, proved to be a tremendous experience and a trip that no one will ever forget. The competition site was spectacular, and the thrill of the crowd cheering "USA... USA... USA..." made us all very proud and very nervous! The girls performed beautifully! It was all we hoped it could be! Wheaton captured the Dance Twirl Team Championship for Team USA. Our soloists were equally successful-Danielle Crabb was named World Strut Champion and received second place in Dance Twirl Solo and World Solo; Melissa Baas received second place in World Solo; Brittany Ecalono was named World Dance Solo Champion and received second place in World Strut; Whitney Whittaker received second place in World Two-Baton, third place in World Strut, and fifth place in World Dance Solo; and Missy Weygand was named World Strut Champion and received second place in World Dance Solo. Danielle Crabb and Brittany Ecalono won the World Duet Twirl Championship!

The 1996 Maryland State Championships was a repeat of last year's "sweep". The four divisional traveling trophies returned to Wheaton, as well as the Grand Champion Dance Twirl Team title. The prize was reduced to \$250, but was still enough for the girls to have a DJ at their annual celebration party.

Nationals was very rewarding. Both Twirling Corps, the Juvenile "Dancin' Through the Decades and the Junior "Hot! Hot! Hot!", won their USA National title to earn appearances at the finals on Friday. The Dynasty Award count was evenly matched from last year to eleven; one shared with the Jazz Dolls for Tiny Tot Small Dance Twirl. The senior Twirling Team performed at the Big Show again, as well. Individually, the soloists were terrific. Wheaton had four out of the top six "Big One" pre-teen finalists and our National Twirling Champion Michelle Baas. Congratulations to her and Danielle Crabb, Whitney Whittaker, Melissa Baas and Missy Weygand on placing "top 6". Wow!

1997 was another year of change in twirling. The regions were divided to split Pennsylvania and Maryland. Wheaton was now the proud host of the new Mid Atlantic Regional Championships.

Traveling was a blast! We spent three days in Orlando, at Twirlmania and enjoyed four days at the West Regionals, in Los Angeles, California. Maryland State was hotter than hot. And Wheaton was hot, too. The Tiny Tots and Juveniles swept their divisions with "Tailfeathers" and "Hungarian". "Toccata", the new Junior Dance Twirl, did an awesome NO DROP, and "Classical Gas" was a hit as well. Wheaton won the 1997 Grand Champion Dance Twirl title of Maryland State for the fourth consecutive year.

National's camp paid off with "Sweet Sixteen", The Junior! Senior Twirling Corps winning Grand World Champions on Wednesday night. It was the "sweetest" victory ever. The Juveniles kept their streak alive in Dance Twirl competition with "Hungarian" winning both divisions. "Toccata" swept the Junior division, and we were jointly presented the choreography award for "Classical Gas", which was shared with The

Dynamics. Congratulations to Brittany Ecalono and Taylor Guardino for continuing the tradition of Grand National Twirling Champions hailing from Wheaton, that Michelle Baas started last year.

1998 started off being a "World" year, and made our focus shift to a single show. "The Wheaton Gazette". The Twirling Corps featured sections of the newspaper and tunes like Burnin' Love and Raining Men! It was a fun show that won top honors at AYOP, with the second Grand World Twirling Corp Championship title, for Wheaton, (in a row)!

Teams had a tremendous year too! Maryland State was a testament to the hard work we did this year. Wheaton won the 1998 Grand Champion Dance Twirl title, for Maryland State, for the fifth consecutive year. The girls went on to capture four Grand World Dance Twirl Team titles and two Grand World Twirl Team titles. The Sandy Myer award for choreography was awarded for the new Senior team, "Seasons of Love". It was another successful and exciting week!

1999 has been a year of hard work, with producing our new Twirling Corps, "Makin' Memories", and adding two new dance twirls to our repertoire. A new funky version of "Can Can" became our Juvenile Team with adorable costuming to fit the theme! The Junior Team, draped in classical black & white performed a new routine to "Storm". The Tots and Seniors are repeated "Blondes and "Seasons" for a second go-round.

Wheaton captured the Maryland State Grand Team award for the 6th consecutive year! Our Beginner Juveniles won their title as well, beating more teams in that division, than any other category!

Nationals was a roller coaster this year (1999). A "world qualifying year" is a more emotional nationals and was this was less predictable than ever. The twirling corps performed on Wednesday night and was stunned when the announcement was for the Modernettes and not Wheaton. It was a heart breaker that meant the remainder of the week would be more important than ever before. The hardest part was Thursday morning prelim rounds, but the girls were true competitors and won first in every round, showing their strength of will and character. By Saturday morning, they were back on top of their game and came out victorious in five of the eight final rounds, two of which gave them the opportunity to defend our World team championship from Italy four years prior. Storm captured the Mike Moore traveling plaque for the first time and Seasons won the Sandy Meyer award for the third consecutive year! The seniors were excited to perform in another Big Show.

It was a great decade for WHEATON!!!

2000 started off with preparations for Birmingham England and a lot of USTA competitions to get "Seasoned". (No pun intended). The girls were on the cover of "The Journal" for six communities and featured on Fox TV's News. The trip to England was a once in a lifetime experience for many of us and the tour was as physically challenging as the competition. With loud "USA" chants from the crowd, filling the NIA, and the adrenaline as high as it could be, both teams were awesome and precise! Their efforts and performances earned them the Gold for the USA and the achievement of a goal set many years ago. It was amazing!

In May, Wheaton competed in the USTA circuit Maryland state Championships and won every division in which we entered. We premiered a new dance twirl for the Seniors (Fosse) and Tots (Skip to my Loo) and enjoyed the freshness of a different scene. The audience at a USTA competitions are both friendly and enthusiastic! A nice change! This proved to be our only State contest this year, as our NBTA State was cancelled this year. With two world teams coming from the same state, the funds were used to help each member of the USA team to go to Birmingham.

Nationals 2000 was a trip to Indiana that will be remembered when the girls are old ladies. It was the first time ever that the competition had to be baited (and it was during our Tiny Tot team "Skip to my Loo") because of a tornado warning! We were told to go to the interior of the building for safety. Well, it was totally SCARY! Try getting six and seven year olds to focus on competing again after that! Whew!

All in all we had another great year. The Juvies did the best, winning three off our Dynasty Awards (including our namesake!). The Juniors won two Dynasty's and shared the Mike Moore traveling trophy award. The Seniors earned a performance in the Big Show for their twirling team and captured the Sandy Myer choreography award for "Fosse".

This has been a busy season so far! We have a new logo (compliments of Sue Ellen Thompson) and a website (mastered by Cissy Williams) bringing us up to date. We even do most of our newsletters and communication through email!

The girls have been working hard on 4 new elite dance twirls (Boogie Fever, Candide, Witches of Eastwick, and The Wizard of Oz). We have a new group of babies joining us at AYOP (Rockin Robin) and an impressive beginner team too (Mask).

Some highlights from 2001 included a performance at the MCI Center, Congressional Cup, Super 44 Football Tournament, Las Vegas International, USTA World Trials in Atlanta, Mid-Atlantic Regionals, USTA State and of course NBTA state.

Wheaton won seven of eight elite Dance Twirl Divisions at NBTA State in June. The Juveniles and Seniors captured the Divisional Titles as well. With our goals set high for AYOP in July, we are well on our way!

Nationals 2002 was a rollercoaster ride of a lifetime for the Junior and Senior Teams. We won 6 out of the 8 preliminary competitions. Unfortunately, the final outcome was both disappointing and surprising to all of us. The Junior team came up short, winning one of their four divisions. They were unable to repeat the success of state and competitions earlier in the week. The Senior team turned in their best performances ever and came out winning just one out of our divisions. It earned them a trip to France, however, to represent the USA in the next World Championships in Marseilles. Overall the girls looked great and won the popular vote of the audience. The Tots and Juveniles held their own against stiff competition too. The Tots won the Large Twirling Team and the Juvenile Dance Twirl won both divisions.

Wheaton was also proud to have Alysha Depp crowned as Teenage Miss Majorette of America and Grand National Twirling Champion. She was also selected to represent Team USA in four individual events in France!

Wheaton had an unusual fall and winter this year. In the fall, the sniper attacks disrupted our normal activity and schools were locked down for almost three weeks. The snow accumulations from December to March were the greatest on record and our regular training was again challenged. The girls who made the trip to Twirl Mania in February enjoyed a few extra days of fun in the sun, while the rest of us spent the week snowed under!

Preparations for the World Championships were also compromised by the world situation, 2003 (Marseilles, France) specifically, the war in Iraq. Not knowing for months whether or not the event would take place, practices continued, but our hopes were guarded. Nobody wanted to get excited about the trip... just in case it was cancelled.

In the end, a decision was made to hold the Championships and our Senior Team took flight. The represented Wheaton and Team USA by performing (in my opinion) what was the best team event that we had the opportunity to watch all weekend. They were awesome! In fact, They were GOLD! In addition, Alysha Depp captured four gold medals in Solo, Two Baton, Freestyle and Strut. It was an adventure from start to finish and the tour was great. We visited the sights in Paris, Monocco, San Remo (Italy) and Marseilles. It was Spectacular!

In May, the twirling world lost a very special young man to a tragic accident. Bobby Foelhinger, son of Sue (Stepper-ettes), was a talented and motivating role model to twirlers throughout the country. His performance at World's was phenomenal! I will remember Bobby most by his final show at the closing ceremonies in France. He was as close to PERFECT as you could get. Nobody entertained an audience with more enthusiasm.

As we prepare and look forward to nationals, 2003, Wheaton is in a re-building phase once again. The Tots and Juveniles show tremendous promise in both talent and work ethic. They understand hard work and are a pleasure to coach! The Juniors and Seniors continue to prove that they are among the best twirling has ever seen!

The staff at Wheaton is turning out "home grown" coaches! Kacy Dovich and Missy Weygand have come on board to coach along with Kristi Moore, Karen Nugent, Stephanie Dallachiesa and Lori Windsor-Hunt, a former Wheaton team member and Miss Maryland, is our own full time modeling coach. In addition Tracy Blumenfeld, former National Champion and Feature Twirler at "Ole Miss" is the "technique queen" and multiple baton pro! I don't believe that there is a better coaching staff anywhere!

Nationals 2003 was a mix of old and new programs. The Tots won all four of their divisional titles (SWEEP!) with "Great Balls of Fire". The Juveniles put up a good fight and walked away with three second place and one third place awards. The Juniors were very impressive with a new dance twirl, "Cirque Du Soleil" - "Dralion". The team pulled together and won two out of the four Dynasty Awards. Our Seniors came back with a vengeance to win the Senior Dance Twirl, Small and Large with "Material Girl". The teams all turned in great performances on Saturday morning to make us proud!

Our individuals were equally awesome! On Thursday, three team members were crowned Beginner and Intermediate Miss Majorette of America! (Hayley Garrity, Lauren Archer, and Fran Christian) The highlight was on Saturday afternoon, when Stephanie Dallachiesa was announced as "Teenage Miss Majorette of America! It is a remarkable feat to have back to back winners in this division and what a way to keep it in the family!

The biggest difference in this trip to Nationals was returning to the Ramada Inn. It felt like old times again! The days of getting lost between Quality Inn and practice facilities were finally behind us!

2004 Mid-Atlantic Regionals was a huge success! Mardi Gras was this year's theme and Cheri Everhart did an amazing job again this time around. Cissy and Bruce Williams enlisted a work force to develop a new "state of the art" computer tabulation system and thanks to the Wheaton Parent Club's support, the event is setting standards for championships everywhere! Nationals seems to arrive sooner every year and 2004 was no exception. Summer training camp was four weeks, shorter than usual, and marked our last year to be house at a Montgomery County School. The team enjoyed a final week of preparation at our new AMAZING facility, the Germantown Soccerplex.

Wheaton had a phenomenal week with numerous highlights including capturing eleven Dynasty Grand

National Championship team awards and winning individual performances. We were honored to continue the tradition of excel Jence in Beginner and Intermediate Pageant contestants and congratulate Megan Krenzke and Angelina Stella! The Tot team won three out of our divisions, but did not upstage the Juvenile team, which was equally successful. (Coppelia made a triumphant comeback!!) The Junior division was the most exciting however, with the four top teams in the country sharing the honors. Wheaton's Juniors won the Small Twirling Team division, earning them a place among the top teams in the United States. Perhaps the most notable success story of the week was the performances turned in by the Advanced Junior team (Lion King). They accomplished a team goal of securing two out of five spots in each of the twirling team and dance twirl team categories at the finals on Saturday morning. The standout team of the week, however was Wheaton Senior Team. They SWEPT all four divisions and baptized what we nicknamed "Wheaton's Big Show" on Saturday afternoon. Thank you, Sandi Rios for an emotional, innovative program, "Somewhere". Not only did the Senior team perform a near perfect routine in the "Big Show", but received a standing ovation. In addition, they were recipients of the Sandy Myer and Mike Moore Choreography awards. Together with Stephanie Dallachiesa's farewell performance (True Colors), the announcement of the Grand National Twirling Champion in the Pre-Teen division, Olivia Lynch, and the crowning of the new College Miss Majorette of America, Missy Weygand, it was the perfect end to an unforgettable week.

2005 was perhaps one of the most successful years in Wheaton's history. Mid-Atlantic Regionals was another great effort as we brought the "Aloha" theme to the competition with the support and contributions from the entire Wheaton family. We competed in USTA competitions at both the Maryland State and North East Regional (Kutztown, PA). Our team was outstanding in each and it was a great way to prepare for a world qualifying national championships.

At Notre Dame, our new programs were a hit! "Happy Valley" and "Don Quixote" both made finals and our Junior team earned the right to represent the USA in not one, but two events in Eindhoven, Holland (More on that later). "Somewhere", the Senior team, repeated with a big win and three national titles, as well as a trip to Europe. The undefeated dance twirl was once again presented with the Sandy Myer Outstanding Choreography award. Our tots were quite impressive as well, winning three of the four divisions at AYOP. The Juvies split the honors winning two of their events. It was awesome Saturday finals! And at the Big Show, there wasn't a dry eye following Missy's farewell performance! It was another "Wheaton" extravaganza!

Individuals were excellent as well! Congratulations to Jackie Stare, who captured the Intermediate Miss Majorette of America title! Our advanced level soloists made a huge statement for the program by turning out world championship routines-Congratulations to Melissa Nugent, who was twice the success with her duet partner Hayley (who also qualified for the world strutting division) and Rosie Stella. Mandy Dovich held a spot for two-baton and Danielle Vanscoyk, whose performances qualified her for three events (Rhythmic Twirl, Solo and Two-Baton) at the world . championships. Great job girls!

The fall brought about the realization that we had a lot of hard work ahead for the coming season. With the World Championships being held in Eindhoven, Holland in April, we had to be certain that the teams were "competition ready" in the spring! In addition, we had three new programs to develop in addition to the reprisal of "Gloria" for the Junior twirl team. Our Tots, Juveniles and Seniors all have newly choreographed routines that continue our transition to a more progressive style of dance twirl. It has made the process more interesting with the growth and movement of our program.

The Mid-Atlantic Regionals theme was the "Wonders of the World" with twirling, of course, being the 8th! (I thought that Godiva chocolate was ahead of twirling, but apparently not). The send off for Team USA was the highlight ...

Now, I will fill you in on our trip to Europe!

The trip to the World Championships in Eindhoven, Holland was both exciting and successful! The Netherlands worked hard to produce a well-organized and memorable event. From the opening ceremonies to the closing awards presentation, it was five days of "Amazing Grace". For Team Wheaton, it was an "Interesting" experience. Here is the long version ...

We departed Dulles on Monday, April 10th (two hours delayed flight) and arrived in Amsterdam, Holland on Tuesday, April 11th at 8:00am (more like 2:00am). Rule #1: Don't over pack. We all did and it wasn't pretty trying to get it loaded onto the bus.

We headed to Anne Frank's House for a tour. If you've ever read the story or seen the movie or play it was an experience you'll never forget. The rooms were so small and being there made it so real. Amsterdam was cold, but it was nice to get out and walk around the town for a short tour. Rule #2: Don't use a travel agent who actually lives in Amsterdam. There weren't a lot of brain cells left in this one! On to Eindhoven for practice (of course). And then, back to the hotel in time for dinner and bed! Rule #3: Don't ask for a towel, blanket or pillow!

Wednesday, April 12th - Music test and rehearsal with the entire Team USA. We had a meeting and then off for more practice. Pizza dinner and a quick return to the Sportscentrum for the Opening Ceremonies. It was thrilling to finally be there! Rule #4: Table dancing is family entertainment in Holland. Still not sure of that one!

Thursday, April 13th - First item on the agenda: Vickie Kajasinsky made it to Holland! Danielle competed in Rythmic Twirl and did an incredible no drop. Hayley did a fantastic strut and the Duets were awesome! (Hayley/Melissa and Melissa/Rosie). The senior dance twirl team did a beautiful (and finally-the last time ever) performance of "Somewhere". The highlight was everyone catching the one/double dive. Rule #5: There is no crying in baseball or baton twirling. The junior twirl team did an impressive job with "Gloria", looking confident and in perfect unison. They all caught the double dive at the end! Danielle made finals!

Friday, April 14th - The junior team was first up with Don Quixote. They were gorgeous! Holland came up with the no drop, however, and a creatively different and unique program that had an original score and story line. Danielle competed in solo and had a fantastic finish. Rule #6: Twirl IN THE BOX. (Not Dani's fault!) She made finals!

Saturday, April 15th -Two Baton! (And a great individual practice session for our girls!) Mandy did a one drop routine and her smile was as big as the arena. Dani turned in a performance that was worthy of a medal as well! Rule #7: Work hard, play hard. We were off to Maastrict for an afternoon of sightseeing and shopping! The walled city is half in Holland and half in Belgium. It is famous for the signing of the Maastrict Treaty that established the European Union and the Euro-currency. (I think). Rule #8: In Europe, the check at the end of the meal can take as long to arrive as the entire meal. We returned to the hotel and with a quick turnaround headed to the Gala Dinner. A buffet for 600! Rule #9: The busses that you pay extra to use aren't only for your use! They weren't at the beginning of the week and still aren't! (But, we did get good at fitting 80 people on a 55 passenger bus!)

Sunday, April 16th - Finals for Rhythmic Twirl and Solo. Dani pulled off two great jobs when it counted most! The pom, twirling corps and show corps competitions were held all afternoon. Finally, it was time for awards.

TEAM USA had a great showing. For Wheaton, we did our share of winning medals, bringing home the gold in Senior Dance Twirl, Junior Twirl Team and Rhythmic Twirl (Dani) and two Duets (Melissa/Hayley/Rosie). We captured three silver medals in Junior Dance Twirl, Two Baton (Mandy) and Strut (Hayley) and two more bronze medals in Solo and Two Baton (Dani). Rule # 10: The Netherlands and all of the European teams have improved tremendously in the past three years!

Monday, April 17th - Rule #11: If you load and unload a bus enough times, you get better at it! Unfortunately, the tour guide doesn't! It was finally time for some FUN! We departed the dreary, rainy Eindhoven for Bruges, Belgium. When we arrived, it was refreshing to see the sunshine and blue skies! The afternoon was spent in the market square; walking the streets, boating on the canals, seeing the sights, eating chocolates, shopping, riding horse drawn carriages, and taking in the flavor of a European city place. Rule # 12: The attic doesn't double as a hotel room!

Tuesday, April 18th - We were off to Amsterdam, but there was an accident on the highway, so we took a detour to the beach! It was windy and chilly, but neat to see the North Sea (up close and personal!) On the way back to the city, we enjoyed sights of the bright and colorful tulip fields along with more windmills and after circling the same block that our hotel was located in several times, we finally reached our home for the next twelve hours. Rule # 13: Busses weren't made to fit in towns that were built before busses were invented! Rule #14: Wear your sunglasses when you go outside at night! The hotel was located in the heart of the famous Red Light District (great planning, again). It was a short night, but most of us managed to find great eats and some not so great sights.

Wednesday, April 19th - We arrived at the airport early enough to use the four hours we had to get checked in. I've never seen a plane with more entertainment options on it! The ride home was a breeze! The drive home from the airport was a different story. We made it in time for Washington rush hour! Rule #15: Everything that you didn't get done before you left is still waiting for you!

With the World Championships behind us and the new season ahead, we had a lot to accomplish in a short amount of time. We had been competing an "older" team in preparation for the world championships; so essentially, our season began on May 1st. It was a challenge to fit an entire season into two and a half months, but with the USTA North East Regional Championships as a deadline, the girls rallied to get up to speed quickly!

Just prior to AYOP, the Senior team headed south to the USTA National Championships in Savannah, GA. Wheaton had not competed in that organization's biggest event since 1983! We had a great time performing in a different arena, for an audience that was welcoming and enthusiastic! It was an interesting and jammed packed for two days! After winning the Senior National Dance Twirl Team title, there was still time to enjoy a walk through old town and have a great dinner in the heart of the historic district. They say that Savannah offers the best of southern comfort and hospitality. Now, we can say that we've experienced both!

Nationals was simply the best. Wheaton was once again, blessed with a group of parents and talented athletes who pulled together to make the week a huge success! The team not only won thirteen (out of a possible 16) dynasty trophies, but was fortunate to appear in the Big Show, performing both dance twirl and twirl team again this year! The excitement continued as we added another Senior Grand National Twirling Champion (Danielle VanScoyk) and Little Miss Majorette of America (Lexi Duda) to our list of home grown individuals!

Sometimes, it is hard to imagine how lucky we have been to have a program that continuously challenges us all as parents, athletes and coaches. We have set high expectations and standards that are truly impressive and these young ladies always give us their best-The manage to reach their goals with the determination and drive that are fundamental to being successful in all of life's ventures. They thrive on having the discipline to persevere and ability to handle themselves professionally, with the humility that makes them even more admirable. They are a blend of athlete and artist, striving to be perfect, but always knowing that they can be even better.

The fall arrived again and it was time to start meeting planning and finding new ideas for our team. We spent several months training and fine tuning technical skills, learning new choreography and entertaining audiences at halftime performances at Maryland Basketball Games. This "down" time allows everyone a chance to re-focus for competition season and become mentally and physically stronger.

The New Year seems to come faster and faster and 2007 was here before we knew it! Mid-Atlantic's theme was adorable as Wheaton hosted a "Night at the Oscars". It's always neat to see what the creative minds will bring us and we weren't disappointed! Wheaton attended the USTA North East Regionals (NER) once again and though it was HOT, and HUMID and STEAMY and MISERABLE, and UNBEARABLE HEAT and SWEATY-you never heard about it. The girls put on some great performances and came away winning fourteen out of sixteen events.

As we approached summer camp, we were treated to another Wheaton "production" as we call it, this time compliments of the Weygand family. Missy's wedding gave us an opportunity to be reminded that nothing can cancel weekend practice before Father's Day! The weekend was a success both "in" and "out" of the gym.

USTA Nationals was the perfect combination of synchronicity, success, and shopping! The Senior Team traveled to Rochester, MN and in a "to the minute" planned out trip managed to defend their Dance Twirl Team Championship title and still have time to take on the Mall of America!

Wheaton repeated and tied our record breaking 2006 season by capturing 13 out of 16 Dynasty awards! The Tots, "Baby Workout" was adorable and they were rewarded for hard work with three national championship titles. The Juvenile Team was equally impressive, winning three of their own divisions. Wheaton's Junior Team was clearly the highlight of the week with their no-drop (Set #1) fma1s performance of "Gypsies", followed by a full sweep of the four national championship events! "Game over" was the theme for the Senior Team, and after winning three of their titles, they proved that they deserved the respect that they worked so hard to earn in both organizations!

It was time to start all over again-With September and the fall, training season began and with it, the challenge of new programs and a world qualifying year ahead. Our philosophy has always been consistent, regardless of the year, that we try our very best to be prepared and produce the most competitive teams possible. This year has been no different. What was unusual was the decision to change the senior team program in April. That was one of the toughest coaching "calls" -The "Colors" dance twirl was innovative and creative, but NBTA is still not ready for all of that artistry. So, with a major re-think and a selection that has been one of our favorites, "Danse Macabre", we went back to the gym. The program is by far the most difficult in terms of complexity of skills and speed. It is also one of my favorites (This is deemed by how many times I can watch a dance twirl without getting sick of it. I could seriously never get tired of this one!) I applaud the senior team for their attitude, maturity, and dedication to the effort!

There are many other programs rounding out our repertoire this season: "High Bar" (Cirque De Soleil) is an

interesting look at the popular entertainment genre that joins modern/new age dance with twirling. This style looks great on the girls and is instrumental in transitioning skill level with movement. "Millie" (Thoroughly Modern) is the new Juvie dance twirl that is packed with "dance twirl meets cutie-pie". It is energetic and entertaining! We have a touch of Hannah Montana and High School Musical's Ashley Tisdale, and finally a couple of old favorites, Baby Workout and Gypsies!

Preparation for nationals 2008 was started many months ago. The teams enjoyed entertaining audiences at the University of Maryland Basketball Games again this year. It is always a great thrill to see the girls performing for a crowd that appreciates their talent! Wheaton hosted the Mid-Atlantic Regional Championships in April and "Candy Land" was a yummy treat for the participants. The amazing teamwork that happens for this event gets better each year-It is undeniably the premier event in twirling! From decorations to concessions, judges, music, awards, and the organization of the competition, it is an exciting weekend for all twirling enthusiasts! There were a few road trips, of course, and one that we'd rather forget-(Memorial Day weekend in York, PA). UST A North East Regional Championships was rough, but the girls managed to pull through with numerous substitutes in spots-a pleasant surprise to see athletes step up and fill "big shoes". Finally, it's that time of year, again summer camp and the five week version, at that! (This happens once every seven years) We're grateful that you are sharing your evening with us and supporting the most important piece of our nationals' preparation-PERFORMANCE! Thank you for cheering on your team-and for helping to keep a tradition alive and well. This is truly my favorite twirling event of the year-a chance to see old faces and catch up with so many of you!

Nationals is always a challenging week, but this year, being a world qualifier, was a nail biter! Wheaton had a great AYOP, winning 12 national championship teams titles, including a full sweep of the Tot and Junior divisions. The Junior team was also selected to represent the USA at the World Championships, in Ghent, Belgium, in April 2009! In addition to the success of our teams, we were fortunate to have several talented individuals emerge to qualify for pairs (Franchia Everhart and Kayse Lynn Friedman, and Lexi Duda and Kayla Steed), Rhythmic Twirl (Lexi Duda, Hayley Garrity, and Danielle Vanscoyk), Strut (Hayley Garrity and Danielle Vanscoyk), Two Baton (Lexi Duda), and solo (Lexi Duda). This was the most representation in the world arena from anyone team in the USA. The week also saw the coronation of three young ladies in the Beginner Intermediate pageants-Laney Puhalla, Jillian Krawcel and Erin Noble. By Saturday, the stars had aligned to bring Danielle Vanscoyk the title of Teenage Miss Majorette of America!

"Wheaton" returned to the gym in the fall, looking forward to competing looking forward to competing in another world championship, however, there was an extra added incentive to being training early! An invitation to perform for Vice President and Lynne Cheney at the Vice Presidents Mansion, in Washington, DC, had the gym buzzing with rehearsals and preparations. Mrs. Cheney was a twirler, back in the day, and while in high school, Dick would light her fire batons as she performed for half-time! She wanted twirling as the entertainment for a "farewell to staff" dinner party. We produced a show with twenty girls, twirling fire batons, accompanied by the United States Marine Corp band, under the stars that evening! In spite of an early sunset, musical accompaniment that was out of order and ten times faster than ever imagined, it was one of those memories that we will never forget. A professional photographer took photos of our team; the one with the Cheney's in the foyer of their home, surrounded by Wheaton team members, will be sure to have a place in every scrapbook!

There was another special occasion in the fall... Kristi Moore became Kristi Hartig. It's always nice to see our young ladies get dressed up, and a beach wedding in Ocean City created an opportunity to do just that! It was a time for us to come together as family and celebrate one of life's best events!

In December, Wheaton took advantage of a sold out Comcast Center to build some confidence and train

our young team how to perform under pressure. "Christmas in Sarajevo" has become an annual tradition at UMD Men's Basketball games. They look for our show every year and gave another standing ovation for an amazing performance!

Wheaton Celebrates our 50th Anniversary! 2009

Wheaton had a full calendar in the spring, with competitions every weekend! Mid-Atlantic Regionals was held in March this year, to accommodate the World Championships. Our theme was "Nautical", but driven solely by the need to decorate in Red, White, and Blue, so that we could have a proper send off to all the members of Team USA! It was a bit of a stretch, but on-one would guess the method behind the madness. When we finally boarded the plane, you could hear the sigh of relief... we were finished with run-throughs and drop counts, and ready to get the job done!

Belgium, 2009, was far and above the best World Trip! We had a great group of parents and athletes and the perfect balance of practice, touring, competition, and fun. We visited Brussels, Antwerp, and Brugge, all before the completion began. Of course, we trained for three hours every day, before going anywhere! The weather was incredibly cooperative with periods of warmth and sunshine that gave us an opportunity to walk and sight-see. The hotel in Ghent was modern, nestled in the quaint town, and not far from the arena. We were able to negotiate transportation via city bus, and experience European life.

The competition afforded us every emotion that you could imagine, from fear to elation. From a floor that was incredibly slippery, to a Holland team that was once again, aggressive and incredible, our girls remained focused and true to their goals. The Junior team was phenomenal -both dance twirl and twirling team performances, were breath-taking and undeniably poised for a gold medal. The girls made us proud! Our soloists were equally as impressive both Franchia Kayse and Lexi Kayla won gold in Pairs - Lexi, Hayley, and Dani turned in some remarkable performances and won their share of gold, silver and bronze. Congratulations to all of our athletes, for a great worlds!

My favorite motto has always been, "work hard" and "play hard". Once the competition was over, it was time for a well deserved vacation in Paris! We enjoyed two days exploring the sights by boat, bus, and subway, and on foot. The Eiffel Tower was especially thrilling and the Louve was fascinating. We're all looking forward to the next world championships, in three years, to be held in Switzerland!

They say that there is "no rest for the weary"-I'm not sure who said that, but it must have been written with twirling in mind ... the weekend we returned from Europe, the juniors were scheduled for choreography to being their new dance twirl team. It felt as if the season was over, when in fact it hadn't even begun! We have completed several new programs, including "Stem Heat", "Feeling Good", and "Mama, I'm a Big Girl Now", as well as twirling teams for each level. Wheaton traveled to Kutztown, PA for NER (UST A Regional Championships) in June, and won 15 of 16 divisions. It was a great chance to get the nationals cast the experience that they need to build for AYOP!

As we enter the final weeks of our nations training camp, I've been reflecting on the past fifty years and the Wheaton family. In 1966, when I was 6 years old, my sister Vicky and I attended our first A YOP-National Baton twirling Championships held at Ole Miss. The corps that Evelyn D'Anna founded in 1959, with daughters Kathy Dougherty, in the basement of her home on Aspen Hill Road, has gone from a majorette, drum and color guard parade group to the most successful twirling organization in history. Wheaton has won more National Miss Majorette of America winners, as well! In 2009, we celebrate Wheaton's Golden Anniversary. In retrospect perhaps Wheaton's biggest accomplishment is the friendships and family that we've created through a shared passion for twirling! Thank you for being part of the tradition!

Nationals 2009 was the first time since A YOP moved to Notre Dame University in 1970 that the Arena was not available due to renovations. It was also noteworthy because the format switched from five days, to a four day competition. Tuesday was a wild ride with one event following another and sometimes even occurring at the same time. That was the craziest! On Wednesday, however, most of us had a once in a lifetime opportunity to sleep in, which made it totally worthwhile.

Wheaton had a great year as a team, and even better success with our individual contestants. We won 11 Dynasty awards in team finals, which was amazing considering the "series of unfortunate events" that happened on the week prior to our departure. Two broken bones in three days, starting with the Parent Performance (Amanda Burall) and again on Saturday at the warm up competition (Kayse Friedman). We "made a lot of lemonade" at A YOP, but thanks to a group of senior alumni who were very supportive, and Stephanie Dallachiesa (who was voted unanimously -"to take one for the team"), we were able to fill every position opened by a streak of injuries, and make it through the week! Unbelievable. Yet, more astonishing was the list of winners on the podium at Friday's pageant awards and national champion ceremony.

Wheaton inducted three more ladies as beginner/intermediate pageant winners: Lizzie Sondberg, Brianna Rousch, and Ally Duda. In the Grand National Championships Wheaton boasted three title winners: Gabby Steed, Lexi Duda, and Danielle Vanscoyk. There wasn't a dry eye in the field house when Dani performed her farewell, and it was awesome to have a chance to share it with her.

The 2010 season began with record snowfalls and baby boys! We were shut out of the gym for three consecutive weekends due to 50+ inches of snow. The Mid-Atlantic theme of "Welcome to the Jungle" was a lot of work, but turned out to be a total success with stuffed animals for trophies and a giraffe guarding the head table. Adorable!

Wheaton's summer of 2010 was once again, all about preparing for AYOP and trying to fit in the fun along the way. It was refreshing to see our practice pay off with a "record winning" season. Wheaton returned home with 17 out of 20 Dynasty Awards for team competition. The senior team swept their divisions with "Vampires", the Preteen won all four with "Transylvania Mania", and the Juveniles completed their run with "Mama", with four titles. The Juniors captured three out of four of their programs and our tiniest team members won two out of four. It was an amazing year for our teams!

The fall began with UMD and our first ever, "Terp Twirler Day". It was a thrill to see so many baton twirlers at Byrd Stadium, on the field, at the same time! The cold didn't stop the excitement and the audience loved a special halftime, by talent twirlers from the east coast.

It's been a pleasure to watch our team members as they graduate from high school and continue their twirling careers in college. Jackie Stare and Franchia Everheart twirled this season with Penn State University, Colleen Murphy is the captain of the University of Georgia Bulldog Twirlers, Olivia Lynch is twirling for University of Pittsburgh, Mackenzie Snyder is the feature at University of North Carolina (with former Wheaton team member Pam Mc Donald as the coordinator), and Jonathon Burkin, Kayse Friedman, Sarah Mealy, and Danielle Vanscoyk appear each weekend at UMD. It's our hope that all of our Wheaton athletes will someday enjoy the opportunity of entertaining large football stadium audiences across the country!

Wheaton performed our annual Christmas Show for the UMD Basketball game. It was another exceptional appearance that the alumni and season ticket holders look forward to each year, in anticipation of the holidays.

Mid Atlantic's 2011 theme was centered around EASTER for the first time. The timing was perfect for bunny baskets and chocolate awards! It was a colorful and yummy experience for everyone!

As summer approached, we tried to downplay the fact that it was a "World Qualifying" year at Nationals. Everyone trained to the best of their ability and remained focused throughout summer camp. Wheaton premiered many new programs, including "Masquerade", "Money, Money", "Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile" and "Lollipop". They were accompanied by repeat performances of Vampires and Transylvania Mania. We were able to bring home an impressive 16 out of 20 Dynasty Awards for team competition.

It was a tremendously rewarding experience for our older team members to win the honor of representing TEAM USA in three of four team events at the World Championships in Switzerland. Vampires did a PERFECT no drop in the final round that brought tears to our eyes! Masquerade and Vampires won the coveted choreography awards for creativity and performance quality. Our Senior Twirl Team would also earn the chance to compete in Europe! In addition to our success in team competition, the Wheaton athletes turned in performances that would make up one third of Team USA. The duet pairings of Maust/Puhalla, Garrity/Nugent, Burkin/Vanscoyk won their divisions, (three of the four duets). Ally Duda, Gabby Steed, Lexi Duda, Melissa Nugent, Danielle Vanscoyk and Jonathon Burkin were given the nod to represent in Rhythmic Twirl. Rounding out the soloists on Team USA: Laney Puhalla for Super X, Gabby Steed and Jonathon Burkin for Two Baton, Lexi Duda and Jonathon Burkin for Solo. As a result of having more teams and athletes in individual events chosen for the world championships, we returned home from AYOP with the responsibility of keeping TEAM USA on top! It was a challenge that we'd had seen many times before, but this time, our presence would be significant.

When September 2011 arrived, we were off and running! It's difficult to have a team world competition ready in April, but we knew what we had to do and set our goals high! We prepared with exhibitions, performances, and even an audition and three call backs to America's Got Talent. In March we attended three major tournaments in back to back weekends at Penn State University, Congressional Cup, and The Mid- Atlantic Regionals. These events gave our athletes the important conditioning, performance, and essential pressure situations that we needed to complete the process. By the end of March, we were ready to take on the world!

Our trip to Neuchatel, Switzerland, in April 2012, was met with enthusiasm and expectation for adventure and success! We had it all- From our tour of Zurich, the Olympic Village (and altitude sickness) for our training, a day trip to Lucerne, banquets, crepes for almost every meal, elevators that fit one at a time, beautiful lakes and scenic walks, and even snow showers, this was experience to remember! We spent most of our time at the competition venue, which was cold as could be, with cement floors, a small locker room for Team USA, and a free for all warm up space! Between Holland stalking our every move, Spain chucking triples that nearly wiped out everyone on the competition floor, Croatia exactly replicating programs from nationals along with music and costume, and three versions of the "Black Swan", there wasn't much time to get too comfortable in the practice gym. Sometimes, the best part of the competition took place behind the curtain! Yet this will be a world championships remembered for "Live Streaming", and the USA holding on to beat a European contingent whom arrived much more serious than ever before. They were determined to do their best, and weren't afraid to show their national pride.

Team Wheaton and Team USA were "in it to win it". They gave unbelievable performances that just kept getting better and better. The opening and closing ceremonies were substandard, but that didn't make the landslide victory by Team USA any less satisfying. Congratulations to everyone who worked hard, played hard, and achieved greatness! And...thank you to the parents and coaches for hours of sacrifice and commitment to our team!

As with every world year, there was the usual struggle to balance the here and now with what happens when we return from across the pond. Our athletes continued to work towards nationals and learn new programming for AYOP. The youngest team members were dedicated, extending their attention span while building a work ethic and acquiring skills to take it to the next level. Our preteen premiered a new dance twirl, called "Swing". Its upbeat, sassy, and fast tempo was designed to facilitate the move to Junior Elite. The Junior team took on the project of shadowing the Senior World Twirl Team and making it their own. We watched in amazement at MD State at the young talent that was able to step in and fill some very BIG shoes! We also brought two new senior dance- twirl programs to AYOP 2012, "Allegria" and "Sweet Dreams". I appreciated the process in choreographing these pieces that had taken place within a season where there was so much demand placed on our athletes. In June, Wheaton competed in the USTA North East Regional Championships, winning every division. By nationals, we were "spot on" ready! Wheaton had 10 teams qualify for the Friday morning Finals and won 11 Dynasty awards! (Tots with one, Juvies with two, Preteen sweeps! Jr with one, and Sr with two). Our team also won both choreography awards for production and creativity! We were honored to have two MMOA winners, Gabby Steed (Juvenile) and Melissa Nugent (Senior) crowned in the same year. It was a great way to end the Big Show with performances by both Twirl Team and Dance Twirl Team! Yes, it was a long season... culminating in a very rewarding year in the Wheaton history.

The fall of 2012 began the road towards another World championship where qualifying would be held in two years. The Junior team would need a new program to replace "Masquerade". In addition, we would need a new Tot program (Uga Wug) and a new Juvenile routine ("Thriller"). We performed our annual Christmas show at the UMD Men's Basketball Game and competed at local USTA events, as well as taking our first trip to Penn State for the Blue Sapphire Competition. This season, we would add USTA compulsory testing for our athletes who might be planning to attend the Trials for the WBTF World Championships in 2014.

Our theme for the season was derived from a song, "Work Hard, Play Hard". And that we did! After another highly successful USTA North East Regional Championship competition in Kutztown, PA, we prepared to take two teams to the USTA National Championship in Daytona Beach, FL. Wheaton's Junior ("Atlantis") and Senior ("Sweet Dreams") won both of the Small Twirl Team Championship titles. And yes, we did play hard, too! But, for real....we mostly twirled, ate, and slept.

There was a quick turnaround to head to South Bend, Indiana for Wheaton's 45th consecutive National Championship AYOP event.

It was a great week for our individuals and team members. We won 16 Dynasty awards at the Team Finals on Saturday morning!

Tots- Sweep! Four National Titles

Juvies- Juvenile Small Twirl Team Champions and Juvenile Small Dance Twirl Team Champions, Juvenile Large Twirl Team Preteen- Sweep! Four National Titles

Junior- "Atlantis" Junior Small Twirl Team, Junior Small and Large Dance Twirl Team Champions

Senior- "Sweet Dreams" Senior Small and Large Twirl Team, Senior Large Dance Twirl Team Champions.

Our team also won The Sandy Myer Choreography Award for production and The Mike Moore Award for creativity. It was another exciting Big Show, with two more MMOA's crowned from our Wheaton Family (Lexi Duda , Junior and Hayley Garrity, Senior). It was a perfect way to compliment Melissa Nugent's amazing display of athleticism in her farewell performance at the Big Show, AFTER we were performed both Senior Twirl Team and Dance Twirl Team. I'm exhausted just thinking about this past Nationals! Work

hard, play hard...defined.

The fall of 2013 was a busy one, working on skills, technique and program planning. On the agenda: Preteen and Senior team programs! The three new dance twirl premiers at our parent performance this evening were choreographed throughout the year: Fashionista, Snow White, and Hunger Games. In addition to training time, we've performed at another DC Diva Football game, and UMD Men's and Women's Basketball Games. We've traveled to NER and had a great team weekend in competition in Kutztown, as well as NAR in Pittsburgh, PA. It's been another busy season!

Wheaton brought two teams to the USTA National Championships in Stockton, CA in July. Hunger Games and Atlantis competed and won their respective divisions as final preparations were made for AYOP. The week after, we made our way to Indiana for a "world qualifier" week of competition. It was all that we hoped it would be!

Wheaton won a total of 15 Dynasty Awards, the Mike Moore Award for Excellence in Choreography and the Sandy Myer Award for Best Production. The Tots went 2 of 4, the Juvies swept, the Preteen went 2 of 4, the Junior Team won 3 of 4, and the Seniors swept. We competed ten teams in the Saturday morning finals!

Our success translated to representing the USA at the World Championships in Italy, April 2015. Wheaton won the honor to compete three out of the four divisions, including the Junior and Senior Twirling team and the Senior Dance Twirl Team (Hunger Games).

The Individual team members experienced unprecedeted achievements, as well. Team members selected to represent the USA included soloists, Alaina Rongione, Holly Krawczel, Gabby Steed, Laney Puhalla, Deayza Peebles, Claudia Swauger, Lexi Duda, Rachel Caldwell, and Melissa Nugent. Lignano-Sabbiadoro, Italy..... Team USA 2015! But first, there would be more competing and experiences to be had in the 2014 season.

Part of the vision for our future is being on the cutting edge of whatever is happening in twirling within the USA and on the World level. It was always a dream to have our athletes compete against the Japanese. The only venue to achieve that goal until now had been through the USTA Trials system. With that in mind, it was decided to send two pairs, two juniors, and a senior man to begin this next chapter for our organization. Congratulations to our Team USA athletes, Senior Pair (Burkin/Nugent), Junior Pair (Duda/Noble), Junior Women Soloists (Duda and Puhalla), and Senior Men's Soloist (Burkin), on earning a position on TEAM USA to compete at the World Baton Twirling Federation World Championships in Nottingham, England in August 2014. The performances by our Wheaton athletes were both impressive and historic! The hardware earned: Junior Pairs (Duda/Noble) Bronze, Junior Women (Lexi Duda 4th and Laney Puhalla 9th), Senior Men;s (Jonathon Burkin) 4th. And Senior Pairs (Jonathon Burkin/Melissa Nugent) won gold. It was the first-ever gold medal for the USA Senior Pairs and the first time since the 2005 Syndication Team (Sandi's team where Missy and Stephanie competed) that the USA National Anthem was played in a WBTF Awards Ceremony. Nine years later, this USTA "TEAM USA" had so much to be proud of with the strength of this showing at the World Championships. Most significant to the twirling world, however, was that this monumental competition was proof that athletes in both NBTA and USTA, could crossover between organizations with a positive, successful outcome. Congratulations to our Wheaton athletes for promoting unity, cooperation, and sportsmanship!

As always, September arrived and it's time to start all over, again. This year was no exception, but in a world year, the inception of a season takes place twice; Once in the fall and then, after the World Championships, in the spring. It's a challenging time for the entire program, coaches, and athletes, to be in a full press, all year. First up, was converting not one "Gloria" twirl team, but two new "Gloria's". Then, we would focus on individuals and the maintenance of "Hunger Games". Simultaneously, work on the 2015

season needed to proceed, with a new “Tot”, “Juvenile”, and “Junior” dance twirl programs. We would wait until after worlds to start a Senior Dance Twirl. The plate was full! Winter was unforgiving and did not help our cause. In all of the years of Wheaton, we have never been snowed out of consecutive weekends due to snow and ice. Our training schedule was tested over and over, and the athletes rallied to find a way to be prepared for APRIL PERFECT!

We were fortunate to appear on Fox 5 Washington News for a segment on our upcoming trip, as well as attend the Blue Sapphire Classic and perform at the Congressional Cup Tournament in the weeks prior to our departure. Irene Johnson beautifully documented our Team USA Send off Performance so that we could share it with our Facebook friends and family.

The responsibility of our Wheaton organization to compete in so many events was a tremendous task: three team events, a pair (and a half), five solo one baton, four two baton, four rhythmic twirl, and two strut competitors. Finally, March 28 arrived and it was time to walk the walk....

Our itinerary set us down in Venice, Italy, where we checked in to the hotel and hit the ground running to Venice. Gondola rides, gelato, Italian pasta, and a maze of streets that all began and ended nowhere awaited. It was a fun evening for all of us, exploring the city, taking pictures, and making memories. We departed the next morning for the seaside town of Lignano, where we would eat most of our meals at the only restaurant in town, and take the stairs because the elevator would make you late! This deserted town center would transform from closed businesses on Monday to a bustling, all night party people extravaganza by Thursday of the same week! Basically, when we were ready to sleep, the town came alive! It was really quite a nice place to compete for a week, with adequate training facilities, bus service that was flexible enough, a taxi when you needed it most, and of course, pizza and wine at every meal.

The competition site was not nearly as accommodating. It was smaller than any venue we've seen in Europe, with circus tents for warm up (or freeze your butt off if you chose to go outside), and doors that opened into the arena floor complete with all of the smoke that filled the gymnasium like a cloud by the days end. There was really a wealth of life lessons to be learned there; the dressing room is off limits because you can't breath over the stench of body odor, the concession line is so long that you can walk to town to get food faster than you can get it there, if you get up from your seat, don't expect it to be there when you got back, it's was like musical chairs, and when in Europe, you are going to walk everywhere. Even the busses off load blocks away! It helped to alleviate the real stress, however, of a world championship competition and work to be done

Our Wheaton athletes didn't disappoint.... The performances were each more breath-taking and we represented with confidence, professionalism, and excellence. The teams were tremendous and well-received by the European audience. They gave us a standing ovation for “Hunger Games” and at finals, when we took the floor, there wasn't a sound in the arena.

The individuals were equally commanding in their programs. Team USA members had to feel like celebrities with all of the pictures and congratulatory well wishes! The internet was “a-buzz” with posts and live streaming during the overnight hours in the USA. It was hard to believe that so many eyes everywhere were watching this event! In a World Championship that was met with unprecedeted growth from our European counterparts, Wheaton won every division where we were the USA qualifier; Juvenile Pairs and all three team categories. Our soloists, Alaina Rongione, Gabby Steed, Laney Puhalla, Deayza Peebles, Lexi Duda, Rachel Caldwell, and Melissa Nugent turned in award winning performances, winning numerous gold, silver, and bronze medals. It was thrilling to be a part of this world championship! Next location for NBTA Worlds: Norway 2018

The 2015 season started over again on April 15th with the Mid-Atlantic Regional Championships. There were individuals to qualify for AYOP and the National Championships, as well as teams to finish and a new senior program to design! We competed 32 teams at NER USTA North East Regional Championships winning 14 of 16 advanced division titles. Nearly two and a half months have passed and we are putting the finishing touches on routines as we head to the 2015 NBTA National Baton Twirling Championships in just a few weeks. Our premiering programs for this year: Tot Team will perform "Walk the Dinosaur", the Juveniles will compete their "Super Hero" program, the Junior Team will look like a rainforest in "Birds" and the Senior ladies will haunt you with "Seven Devils". We look forward to seeing "Fashionista" and "Snow White" again this year, as two favorites in our repertoire.

Our Nationals Training Camp is in full swing, with just two weeks to go! Thank you for joining us this evening to celebrate our passion for twirling--- Your continued commitment of our team keeps Wheaton traditions alive....

And don't forget to check us out on social media- and a special Thank you to Irene Johnson for managing our Facebook site and your work with bringing twirling to life through mini-docs and shorts.... Memories to last a lifetime!

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Wheaton DT Teams on Twitter @WheatonRocks, too!

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