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In most parts of the country as the calendar moves to March, you can tell it’s almost spring, as spring training begins for Major League Baseball, and in Adams County you can tell it is almost spring as district, regional, and state championships for high school wrestling get underway. As we all know, high school and youth wrestling in this area are HUGE!!! This month’s issue has a great feature story on Montana DeLawder.

Montana is a female wrestler for Gettysburg Area High School and she is truly something special. While her success as a freshman has been inspiring, she follows a line of several female wrestlers from area high schools. Times sports editor Josh Martin does a great job profiling DeLawder and providing historical perspective on past female wrestlers at area high schools.

There are several other great feature stories on current and past female leaders from Adams County. Please make sure you check them all out. Special thanks to the Gettysburg Area Historical Society for their help with putting this issue together. With the support of our partners at the historical society, we were able to profile five women who were leaders in our community when times were different and it was unusual to see a woman taking a leading role outside of the home.

One of our newest contributing writers and someone we all know very well, Michael Cooper White, got to sit down with three of the current leading ladies in Adams County and provides a detailed perspective of all three of these special women.

Another feature in this issue looks at what Adams County and some great organizations in the area are doing to help children with Autism. I have a niece who is Autistic and I know I am thankful that there are many more programs available to help children who suffer from this disease. Kudos to Jim Hale for seeking out this story and telling it so well.

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BY HARRY HARTMAN

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Throughout Adams County’s history, women have contributed to its success in a number of ways: as writers, nurses, teachers, and philanthropists. Below is a short history of five of these women. Thank you to the Adams County Historical Society and the Gettysburg Times for providing access to this information.
Annie Danner
(1833-1920)

The Danner family was instrumental in establishing the Adams County chapter of the Young Women’s Christian Association. Though she died before the local YWCA got off the ground, Annie was perhaps the most passionate of all the family members about the welfare of working girls and the need for a local organization to assist and support them.

According to a history of the YWCA written by Carolyn Blocher, members of the local Acorn Club, a group for business women, had stayed at a YWCA facility while on vacation. They were interested in starting a YWCA chapter in Adams County, but found it to be cost-prohibitive.

When Irene Danner Reinwald, Annie’s youngest sister and last remaining member of the family, died in 1923, the family home at 8 Lincoln Square was willed for the establishment of a local YWCA. In honor of its founder, the YWCA established an Annie Danner Club in 1927 with the intent “to help each member understand herself more clearly, see herself in relation to the world of which she is a part, and to satify a longing for the worthwhile both for herself and her fellow workers, through wholesome recreation and a self-governing club.” Club meetings often included light entertainment to provide a much-needed break for young women, who often worked long hours in the county’s silk mill, furniture factory, or two shirt factories. Club members also performed service to the community.

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The YWCA Gettysburg & Adams County operated at the Lincoln Square location until the 1980s, when the present-day facility was constructed on Fairfield Road in Cumberland Township.

Salome Myers Stewart
(1842-1922)

Salome “Sallie” Myers was a 21-year-old school teacher at the time of the Battle of Gettysburg. Like many young women, she served as a nurse for wounded soldiers during the battle, although she may not have felt she was cut out for the job. She wrote in her diary, “I had never been able to stand the sight of blood. But I was destined to become accustomed to it.”

Sallie’s work tending to the wounded at St. Francis Xavier Church those few hot July days led to another life-changing experience. The first soldier she encountered at the church was Sgt. Alexander Stewart, who had been mortally wounded. According to an account published in the Gettysburg Times, Sallie took Sgt. Stewart to her home to care for him until he died a few days later. She then notified his family of his death and arranged for his burial.

A week later, the sergeant’s family traveled to Gettysburg to thank Sallie for her care. The staff of the Adams County native, Annie married John Warner in 1873, and the couple amassed a modest fortune through their local stores.

In 1918, Annie became ill with the flu and “lay between life and death” for a month, according to her obituary. Her husband, already convinced of the need for a hospital in Adams County following an outbreak of influenza at the local Army camp, decided to donate both money and land to build one. According to Annie’s obituary, her husband said at the time: “I am going to build a hospital as a memorial to my wife, in the event she dies, or as a thank-offering in the event she recovers.”

John donated an estimated $20,000 plus an additional $5,000 in land to establish the hospital in the southwest part of Gettysburg Borough. A few local residents donated additional money to complete the project, and John and Annie were pictured with shovels breaking ground at the site on March 18, 1919. The first patient was treated at the hospital in March of 1921.

Annie died at her home on Baltimore Street in 1927.

Annie Warner
(1853-1927)

Longtime residents of Adams County will remember when what is now Wellspan Gettysburg Hospital was the Annie Warner Hospital. A Gettysburg native, Annie married John Warner in 1873, and the couple amassed a modest fortune through their local stores.

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Annie died at her home on Baltimore Street in 1927.
AN ABUNDANCE OF LEADING WOMEN
IN ADAMS COUNTY

BY MICHAEL COOPER-WHITE

When the great Civil War battle was fought here a century and a half ago, those regarded as heroes were almost all men.

Today, so many of our local leaders engaged in heroic work are women.

In some sectors—higher education, recreation, and social services in particular—nearly all the current chief executives are female. A tally of women who bear the titles of president, principal, CEO or executive director in Adams County agencies and institutions readily exceeds two dozen. Dozens more also serve in senior level leadership positions, including as government employees, elected officials, and volunteer board officers.

Each of these dynamic leaders in our community has a compelling story of how she rose to a top spot in her organization. The handful interviewed for this article would be the first to say that their personal achievements are merely representative of the extraordinary contributions of so many others.

LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Gettysburg College is widely recognized as one of the nation’s top-ranked small liberal arts institutions. Its president, Dr. Janet Morgan Riggs, has been a member of the college community for 45 years since enrolling as a student in the fall of 1973. Here is a story of someone working their way up through the ranks in one institution—from professor of psychology to departmental chair, a stint in the President’s Office as a special assistant to the late Gordon Haaldad, and as the college’s provost prior to being named the institution’s 14th president.

Students refer to her affectionately simply as “JMR.” Reflecting on her own journey to the top spot at the college, where she presides over a 2,600-member student body, and faculty and staff workforce of over 700, Riggs spoke of encouragement received from both male and female mentors.

“I was working 20 hours a day,” she reports, and her efforts were finally rewarded as she donned the coveted yellow shirt. For those convinced that a woman must work twice as hard as a man to succeed in certain arenas, Dwyer’s Navy promotion story offers a counterexample.

Across town at the community college, HACC Vice President Shannon Harvey, is a recipient of one of this year’s YWCA Gettysburg & Adams County Callie Awards for outstanding women leaders. She reported that, “HACC is deeply committed to an environment characterized by inclusion, cultural sensitivity, respect and safety.”

Both HACC and Gettysburg College have diversity officers, and all three institutions have personnel responsible to ensure compliance with U.S. Title IX anti-discrimination requirements.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A ‘HEALTHY ADAMS COUNTY’

Women also lead the way in the realms of recreation, fitness and social services.

When a group convenes to coordinate efforts promoting citizens’ health and well-being, eight of the ten persons around the table are women. Women hold top spots at the YWCA, Gettysburg Area Recreational Authority (GARA), Gettysburg Hospital, Survivors Inc., South Central Community Action Programs, Adams County Office on Aging, United Way, Manos Unidas Hispanic American Center, Adams County Arts Council, Adams County Library, and several other non-profit agencies.

The YWCA Executive Director Deb Geesey’s journey to the top spot mirrors Riggs’. Geesey was a long-time employee prior to the board tapping her to serve as executive director. By contrast, GARA’s relatively new chief executive, Jackie Dwyer, was brought in all the way from California to serve at the Rec Park during a time when the new entity formed by Cumberland Township and the Borough of Gettysburg was still struggling to gain the community’s confidence. That it has done so under Dwyer’s leadership is attested by members of the GARA board of directors and many others.

Before college, Dwyer enlisted in the U.S. Navy, and soon after 9/11 was assigned to the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier. Not content to settle into roles more typically assigned to female sailors, Jackie aspired to take on one of the most challenging and dangerous duties on the giant floating airfield—as a “yellow-shirt” responsible for the pre- and post-launch movement of all aircraft on the 4-acre flight deck. She worked below deck at assigned секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секретар секрета...
people with diverse interests and responsibilities to come together and envision every possible scenario that could evolve during a summer-long series of events. Time and again in our meetings, she would say quietly but insistently, “We need to think outside the box. We only have one shot at this, and we all need to work together to get it right.”

Despite advances by women and greater acceptance of their leadership, Adamik echoes others’ conclusion that women often must work harder and navigate the politics of some male colleagues’ continuing dismissive attitudes.

“We’re still fighting for respect,” she reflected, pointing to requests women receive for tasks many men consider beneath them.

Adamik describes her vision of “collaborative leadership,” a counterpoint to top-down or command-and-control direction. A feminist style is “more like a willow tree, more agile” and focuses on team-building. “Stronger leaders, men or women,” concludes Adamik, “are the ones who are most humble.” She too finds her greatest joy watching others flourish, and feels a deep measure of satisfaction “if I have made some small contribution to their success.”

While in some areas, the traditional pattern of male predominance still prevails—fire companies, law enforcement, the judiciary, the local clergy ranks and some businesses—in other realms where men were typically “at the top,” new winds are blowing as well.

Again, many new leaders work quietly far from the public eye. At Fairfield airport’s Mid-Atlantic Soaring Association, for example, the only female flight instructor, Catherine Williams, was recently chosen by her peers and its board as Chief Flight Instructor. Similarly, at Gettysburg’s Regional Airport, 2d Lt Sarah Korlinski is a leading officer and mentor for aspiring aviator cadets in the Gettysburg Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol.

**YOUNGER LEADERS RISING**

Looking to the future, a quick glance around the community is reassuring that emerging younger leaders are already demonstrating their competence and commitment. The Gettysburg Times own ranks include outstanding young journalists like Ashley Andyskay Hayes, Vanessa Pelcherio and Mary Grace Keller. At the Gettysburg Hospital Foundation, a recent United Seminary graduate, Kristin Vought, is Director of Development. Kaycee Kemper, vice president at Adams Economic Alliance, and Stacey Fox, vice president at Destination Gettysburg are but two others among many up-and-coming “executive ready” leaders who will be prepared to assume top spots in their current organizations or elsewhere if given the opportunity.

Girls and boys growing up in the Gettysburg area after the great Civil War battle may well have concluded that the only ones who could be named heroes were men. Thanks to the host of inspiring local leaders, as they look around themselves today, our young people of both genders can find reasons to believe those who tell them, “You can be anything you want to be.”

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**Graduation Moments**

Whether it's kindergarten or college, for our May / June edition!
Submit by April 16 to design@gburgtimes.com

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**Easter’s Best!**

Reader Submitted Photos

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The Outlet Shoppes at Gettysburg

**Spring Fashion is in Full Bloom**

Present this ad to Guest Services to receive your FREE Catalog book with over $250 in additional savings.

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Upper Adams Red Hats for Easter Bonnets

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Gettysburg Borough Council Vice President
Jake Schinder 1982

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Donna & Edward Plank
Sweetheart Dinner February 14, 2017
**Easter FAVORITES**

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**Coconut Cake**

**Ingredients:**
- 1 package yellow cake mix
- 1 cup (1/2 cup) instant vanilla pudding mix
- 1/4 cup water
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 2C. coconut
- 1C. chopped pecans
- 2C. brown sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 1/2C. milk

**Frosting:**
- 4 TBS butter, divided
- 2C. coconut
- 1 pkg. (8oz.) cream cheese
- 2 tsp. milk
- 1/2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 1/2C. confectioners sugar

**Directions:**
1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
2. Spread coconut on bottom of 8" cake pans.
4. Add 1/2 cup sugar & blend.
7. Sprinkle remaining coconut over cake.

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**Asparagus Tart**

**Ingredients:**
- 1 1/2 lbs. Asparagus, trimmed
- S. on. softened cream cheese
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tbsp. Olive oil

**Directions:**
1. Toss the asparagus with olive oil, salt & pepper; set aside.
2. Bake at 400 degrees for 25-30 mins or until cake springs back when touched in center.
3. Return to the oven and bake for 15-20 min.
4. Whip the cream and add the asparagus to a plate and toss with the whipped cream.
5. Brush the exposed pastry with cream. Layer the asparagus evenly over the cream mixture.
6. Brush the exposed pastry with cream.
7. Sprinkle with remaining Parmesan cheese.
8. Bake at 400 degrees for 10-15 mins or until lightly golden and puffed.
9. Return to the oven and bake for 15-20 min.

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**Easter Chicks Deviled Eggs**

**Ingredients:**
- 6 Boiled Eggs
- 1/4 C. Mayonnaise
- 1 Tbsp Sweet Pickle Relish
- 2 tsp. Mustard
- Salt & Pepper
- 1 Mini Carrot
- 1 Sweet Midget Pickle
- 2 tsp. milk

**Directions:**
1. Cook eggs in boiling water for 2-4 minutes.
2. Cut strip off pickle and then cut small slice off the bottom.
3. Cut carrot so that you end up with 6 small triangles.
4. Place eyes and beaks in place.
5. Mix yolks with a fork and stir in mayonnaise, pickle relish and mustard.
6. Pipe mixture into cooked egg whites, piping until over full.
7. Cut small slice off bottom of egg to get a flat base.
8. Cut out legs around middle of egg.
9. Remove shell and place in a bowl.
10. Cut strips of paper towels and place in a bowl.
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12. Mix 12 small squares. Mash eggs with a fork and mix in mayonnaise, pickle relish and mustard. Salt
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A minimum of 80 hours is suggested for completing the Gold Award, according to GSUSA.

Worley estimates she impacted about 100 children through her clinics at Spring Grove, the East Berlin Area Community Center, and Jewish community center.

Worley’s high school tennis coach, Holly Mertzger-Brown, served as a mentor during the project.

Having earned her Bronze and Silver awards earlier in scouting, Worley said getting the Gold was a great way to finish off her 13 years in Girl Scouts.

“It’s not just Brownies. A lot of people, when they think of Girl Scouts, they think it’s for younger girls,” Worley said.

“I think it’s important for girls, especially my age...to be in Girl Scouts because it can make them feel like they’re actually a part of something,” Worley said.

Through scouts, Worley said she discovered her crafty side, practiced communication skills through cookie selling, followed the values in the Girl Scout Promise and Law, learned first aid and CPR, and served her community.

“It always pushes you to try to achieve something,” Worley said of the organization.

One of her favorite memories of scouting was visiting Arlington National Cemetery every year with Troop 20501 to lay wreaths on graves.

Worley said the experience with Wreaths Across America taught her the importance of honoring veterans.

Her troop also took trips to go white water rafting, hiking, and to the Flight 93 memorial. Through these experiences, Worley made a life-long friend. She and Karena Myers started scouts together in Daisies and are still close-knit.

Worley’s high school tennis coach, Holly Metzger-Brown, served as a mentor during the project.

Between sports, clubs, church groups, and other activities, Worley sees children being pulled in all sorts of directions, making it difficult to recruit girls to scouting. She thinks it’s worthwhile for girls to make time for Girl Scouts.

“It just builds those skills that they don’t necessarily get in school,” Stuart said, naming leadership, team building, and confidence.

One of the benefits of Girl Scouts is that it provides a female space in which girls can thrive and be inspired by other female leaders, Stuart said.

“Just giving them that self-confidence and ability to express themselves is so important,” Stuart said.

Through their troops, girls get to choose what activities they want to do and places they’d like to go, under the guidance of troop leaders and parent volunteers.

Stuart said her troop is especially passionate about rescue shelters and helping animals. Through cookie sales, they were able to donate funds to a local shelter.

Although Stuart is already serving in a leadership capacity in her work life, she says Girl Scouts helped hone some of her skills and teach her new ones. Knowing what it’s like to be a volunteer through Girl Scouts, Stuart said she finds more patience for troop leaders and parent volunteers.

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It looks like a bunch of kids playing happily, but there’s more going on than meets the eye. In fact, the gathering is a lifeline extended to local families.

Autism Fun Night is a monthly opportunity for local children on the autism spectrum and their siblings to interact socially in “a non-judgmental environment,” said Meghan Riordan, one of the event’s organizers. It is also open to children with similar undiagnosed challenges.

Just as importantly, the event provides parents with a chance to “bounce ideas off each other,” learn about resources, and share with “others experiencing what you experience,” she said.

Gaining a sense of solidarity is “huge. It’s very beneficial to have that support system,” Riordan said.

She hopes more families will take part in the free event on the second Wednesday of each month, which includes crafts and many other activities. Recent Fun Nights featured a visit from therapy dogs and a lively yoga session led by Riordan’s sister, Maura Riordan, a highly trained instructor from Clinton, N.J. The events take place from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Fellowship Room at SpiritTrust Lutheran, The Village at Gettysburg, 1075 Old Harrisburg Road.

Fun Night is open to all family members because it’s valuable for children to “practice social skills with kids on the spectrum and not,” Riordan said.

“Dealing with social situations is the most difficult thing for them, so the opportunity to practice in an atmosphere that’s not judging them” is vital, she said.

The events began in August last year as the result of efforts by Riordan, who is the director of communications & finance for United Way of Adams County; JoAnn Smith and Diane Joiner of The Arc of Adams County; and Amy Vail of Pennsylvania Counseling Services in Gettysburg.

There is a great need locally for programs like Autism Fun Night, Riordan said.

Families generally have to travel to Hanover or York to obtain services, which can be a problem for some folks who don’t have a lot of resources, she said.

Joiner said the need for something like Fun Night became clear when another local program closed down. Her son and his
friends who had taken part missed the chance to “get together and have a social experience outside of a structured environment like school,” she said.

Plus, Joiner said, parents who sometimes “feel alone” need a venue where they can learn and bond. “We wanted to be a resource and a place of connection for parents and kids,” she said.

Fun Night’s accepting atmosphere is crucial. “If we judged a fish by its ability to climb trees, it would spend all day thinking it was stupid,” said Smith, executive director of The Arc, which services citizens with mental health, intellectual, and developmental disabilities.

The chance to interact has “a lot of value because they’re finding friendships” as well as developing skills, Smith said.

Fun Night complements a wide variety of programming offered by ARC, said Smith, who noted that “the sooner a parent starts to find services for their child, the more success they will have.”

Children on the spectrum “don’t all fit into a box. They’re all individuals like anybody else” and deserve the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential, just like any other child, Smith said.

Getting to interact with other parents has been very helpful for Caitlin Kolasa, who attended a recent Fun Night. “It was fun to watch him interact with other kids” in “a setting where they can learn and bond,” she said.

Local parent Holly Kirchten wasn’t sure what to expect when she and her son attended their first Fun Night. “We learned something new. I think we’re going to come back,” she said.

Kirchten said.

Families interested in Autism Fun Night can simply show up, or contact Riordan for additional information. Riordan can be reached at the United Way at 717-334-5809 or mriordan@uwadams.org.

The organizers want to increase their outreach to the community, and they hope the event will grow as they and families plan activities and develop long-term programs.

Information about ARC of Adams County and its broad array of programs is available at www.arcadams.pa.org.

Another key resource for area families dealing with autism is TrueNorth Wellness Services and its Amazing Kids Club.

TrueNorth planned a ribbon-cutting ceremony in February to celebrate the opening of its new 24,000-square-foot Amazing Kids Club Autism Center near Hanover at 1181 Westminster Ave. It includes classrooms and offices, along with an outdoor play area.

TJ Williams of Littlestown, then 10, spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony in April 2017.

Through TrueNorth programs such as the club, which helps kids develop their social skills, TJ said he learned that autism makes him “special, not different.”

The organization has “earned a lot” to TJ’s family, his mom Denise Williams said at the groundbreaking. It provides a haven where TJ and his brother Trey who also has autism, “can go to feel safe, with people who understand.”

The new facility will allow some 100 additional individuals to take part in programs such as the Amazing Kids Club, Ken Farabaugh, president of TrueNorth’s board, said at the groundbreaking. More than 250 were already participating in the club’s array of before-school, after-school, and summer programs, he said. The club serves individuals between 2 and 21 years old.

TrueNorth is a nonprofit organization with locations in Adams, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, and York counties. Information about its many services is at truenorthwellness.org

Montana DeLawder is a wrestler.

It just so happens that she is a girl, as well. The gender distinction is of no concern for the Gettysburg High School freshman, who sees herself as she sees her opponents: as a wrestler.

“I approach it the same, they’re wrestlers, not guys or girls,” she says. “Let what happens on the mat take care of itself. I’ll show you through my actions.”

DeLawder has been kicking over any stereotypes left standing this season as she piled up wins and pins for the Warriors. The starting 106-pounder compiled an impressive 24-9 record heading into the individual postseason. Her 16 pins rank among the team leaders, and helped Gettysburg repeat as YAIAA-2 champion in addition to scoring the school’s first win at the District 3 Class 3A Team championships since 1999.

STORY BY JOSH MARTIN
PHOTOS BY JOHN ARMSTRONG
DeLawder did her part in that historic victory, controlling her opponent from Cocalico from start to finish in delivering three crucial team points. There is no novelty to DeLawder’s prowess on the mat; she has been involved in the sport for most of her young life, dedicating herself to training and competing nearly 12 months a year. She knew wrestling suited her perfectly the first time she stepped on the mat, even if she was left with a nagging question.

“My whole family would watch the Ultimate Fighting Championships and the announcers would always say that (the fighters) had a background in wrestling, which I thought was pretty neat,” said DeLawder. “When I was eight years old I brought a wrestling flyer home from school and my dad took me to an open gym, and I liked it and signed up for the whole season. The only thing I couldn’t figure out was why they didn’t let us kick and punch people in the head (like in UFC).”

After spending several years in the Fairfield and Biggerville elementary wrestling programs learning the ropes, DeLawder took up residence in the Gettysburg program under the tutelage of head coach Chris Haines. Haines also runs the Gladiators Wrestling club out of his home in Orrtanna, putting dedicated wrestlers from all corners of Adams County and beyond through the paces in “The Barn.”

From the start, DeLawder became one of his cherished Barn rats, practically living wrestling. “It was the same with all the kids, I want to see how they carry themselves, which is more important than the physical attributes,” said Haines of his early impressions of DeLawder. “It was obvious early on that she was very competitive. Physically, she developed before the boys did and she has a mean streak that helped her become successful.”

DeLawder embraced wrestling from the start, scrapping other sports and cheerleading to focus on her mat pursuits, even though no one in her family had a wrestling background. Haines quickly recognized her willingness to commit to a sport that is unmatched in terms of mental and physical sacrifice.

“You either improve or you get beat up on,” he said. “If you want to wrestle year ‘round and get to a national level, there is a certain commitment involved. Montana’s willing to do those things.”

DeLawder’s success became historic at the Class 3A Section 4 Tournament at South Western High School on February 17. By winning her first two bouts of the tournament not only did DeLawder reach the finals, but more importantly she qualified for the District 3 Class 3A Championships, something no female wrestler had ever done.

A loss in the sectional finals did little to dim the wattage coming from her smile as she exited the podium with a silver medal hanging around her neck. “Everything went as planned, it worked out perfectly,” gushed DeLawder. “I was definitely more nervous, I just had to keep it under control.”

Upon receiving her medal, the crowd was informed of DeLawder’s accomplishment, prompting a hearty ovation from every corner of the gymnasium. “It’s awesome to see everyone support it and not just say ‘hey, that’s a girl,’” she said. “I’m excited to see what’s coming up next.”

DeLawder has helped blazed a trail for female wrestlers in District 3, but she is not a lone pioneer. Rachael (Groft) Meyer was a four-year starter at New Oxford High School, graduating in 2004. She won numerous state- and regional-level female tournaments prior to competing in the 2004 U.S. Olympic Trials. Meyer moved on to coaching at the collegiate level and was recently named the USA Wrestling Utah Girls National Team Coach.

Nicole Small, a 2013 Fairfield High School graduate, concluded her varsity career by becoming the first female to qualify for the District 3 Class 2A Championships. Small qualified at 106 pounds after posting a 20-13 record.

Female wrestling has evolved from a novelty in its early stages to becoming one of the fastest growing sports in America. According to the National Wrestling Coaches Association, there were 804 female wrestlers competing in 1994. That number has skyrocketed to more than 17,000, with 42 colleges now offering women’s programs.

“It’s going to continue to be a big thing,” said Haines. “Culturally it’s becoming more acceptable.” Haines said despite increased acceptance, stereotypes still linger in some circles, but not within the Gettysburg program. “My perspective has always been different; anyone willing to step on a wrestling mat deserves your respect,” he said. “Our school and community have been tremendous, they’re huge Montana fans. People see that she is a good wrestler.”

DeLawder draws some of the loudest roars from Warrior fans when she takes the mat. And when she nails down a pin, her teammates are usually hopping out of their chairs to congratulate her.

“I’ve been pretty fortunate with the community and my coaches, they’ve been really supportive,” she said. “They’ve known me since I grew up and have stuck up for me.”

DeLawder has a clear vision of what she plans to accomplish in wrestling, setting a list of personal short-term and long-term goals. Ultimately, she would like to earn a college scholarship and continue competing following her high school career. To that end, she has traversed the country competing at some of the most prestigious female tournaments in the land.

She went 4-2 in last summer’s Body Bar Nationals, held in Irving, Texas. She also competed individually and on a team in Fargo, North Dakota, posting a 4-2 overall mark. DeLawder’s personal highlight was a bronze-medal effort in her division at the Super 32 Nationals, where she placed third among a field of 26 competitors.

“That helps me see that I’m capable,” she said. “I can hang in there.”

During this season DeLawder — or, ‘Tana’ as she’s known by teammates, coaches and fans — has displayed a willingness to mix it up with the competition. Agile on her feet, DeLawder has the quick-twitch ability to hit takedowns on the stingiest of foes. Her best position, however, is on top, where she sticks like glue while searching for her favored arm-bar combinations.

“Once you get it, they’re hard to get out of it,” said DeLawder, giggling. “I got that from wrestling at Biggerville for two years.”

DeLawder credits her older brother, Ken Haines, the Biggerville High School head coach, who have mentored her throughout her entire career. The Haines brothers are an intense and imposing pair, with full beards, numerous tattoos and a shared desire to see their wrestlers succeed on the highest level. The visual of an imposing coach shouting at DeLawder could be unsettling to some, but a relationship developed between Haines and his young pupil has been strengthened through years of working together.

“You have to remember that Ken and I can be somewhat intimidating at times, but she’s not intimidated,” said Chris. “There is a high level of respect. Outsiders may see the way I’m taking to her and cringe, but she understands what I am saying. We’re familiar with and confident in each other.”

After a tremendous varsity debut in which any remaining critics were likely silenced, DeLawder stands out not because she is a female, but because she is a wrestler. And a very good one, at that.

“I don’t see a female,” said Haines. “When she steps on the mat she is a wrestler through and through, and she has a job to do. Other people view it differently, but she’s a wrestler.”
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