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## **Mike Clair announces retirement from National Wrestling Hall of Fame State Chapter program**

After 21 years of organizing, guiding and mentoring, National Wrestling Hall of Fame State Chapter Director Mike Clair has announced that he will retire from the position effective December 31, 2014.

Clair became involved with the State Chapter program at its inception in 1993, as a volunteer.

“Mike Clair has done a magnificent job of developing the State Chapter program since he went full-time 14 years ago,” said Lee Roy Smith, executive director of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. “He has provided great service to chapter leaders and to the National Wrestling Hall of Fame staff and board during his tenure. He will be greatly missed but has agreed to remain involved as needed in assisting the person taking over his role and in helping continue this tradition he helped build as a volunteer.”

At a meeting in Las Vegas, former Hall of Fame director Myron Roderick challenged Stan Zeamer, a member of the Board of Governors, and the late Austin Bishop to see if they could make the State Chapter program work.

“I was asked to organize and run the first banquet which was held at Brent Creek Country Club in Lancaster, Pa.,” said Clair. “We had a crowd of 270. Myron attended the banquet, saw the success and we all worked to try and organize banquets from that point on.”

The program started initially to expand the reach of the Hall of Fame. But later it was realized that the Hall of Fame was missing a large portion of the wrestling community at the grassroots levels. The State Chapter program was the answer, and it provided recognition for those individuals in each state who work tirelessly for the sport.

State Chapter honorees were those who had given a “Lifetime of Service” to wrestling, but didn’t qualify for induction into the national hall of fame. The goal

was to extend the mission of the National Wrestling Hall of Fame to as many states as possible.

“My first venture was to help set up a procedural handbook and get all of the states (five of them at the time) doing the same thing,” said Clair. “So even though I did not start the early chapters, I had to re-start them. I have been involved in starting 28 of the 34 chapters we now have.”

In 2000, there were five State Chapter banquets. By 2005 there were 26 chapters, and in 2013 there were 28 chapters with an average attendance of 298 guests.

Each honoree has the chance to celebrate at a banquet surrounded by family, former wrestlers and fans, as well as peers within the wrestling community. Honorees receive a beautiful plaque, a coveted green National Wrestling Hall of Fame jacket and recognition in the Hall of Honors at the national museum.

“I have been able to work with so many of the legends of our sport,” said Clair. “But it was the honorees that I have met that are first and foremost in my heart. The emotion of being at a banquet and hearing what the honorees have accomplished in their lives is something that I will never forget.

“Going to nationals and seeing all the green jackets and having them come up to talk to me is an incredible thrill. I never go to a wrestling event without paper or pencil as someone will always ask me to order them a new jacket or tell me about an honoree that has passed. The past 21 years have been filled with so many blessings.”

Clair began volunteering for the sport in 1960 as a wrestling manager, and has been involved with the sport ever since.

“Being able to look back at what was accomplished with the State Chapter program brings me the greatest satisfaction,” said Clair. “I will always be indebted to the National Wrestling Hall of Fame and hope that even in retirement; I will be able in some way to keep in touch with all the chapters.

“I also need to say thank you to Myron, Lee Roy and the Board of Governors for having faith in me to be part of this outstanding organization. Even though my body says stop, my mind will always be ready to help in any way I can.”

The National Wrestling Hall of Fame will begin accepting applications for the position immediately. Those wishing to apply should submit a resume with cover letter to Maghan Cawlfeld at [mcawlfeld@nwhof.org](mailto:mcawlfeld@nwhof.org). For a complete job description visit the National Wrestling Hall of Fame website at: [www.nwhof.org](http://www.nwhof.org)