With school districts cutting their budgets across the country the time to promote your wrestling program is more important than ever. Not only will promoting your program increase funding, but it can help in gaining attention and popularity as well. Certainly any program can benefit with the sharing of ideas from other successful programs. At Owatonna we have enjoyed success from numerous promotion and fundraising ideas over the years. I'd like to share some of those with you. Maybe you can find something suitable for your program.

Let me first tell you, don't be afraid to try something in terms of fundraising and promotion. We have tried numerous things that failed, but through trial and error we've enjoyed some great success as well. Both promotion and fundraising go hand in hand. They help each other and the benefits all go to the many participants in your program.

I strongly suggest you start with a booster club. Forming a booster club helps get other people involved and once people are involved and feel they can play a role in the program they become more enthused and willing to help and share ideas. The booster club becomes the base of the program. Promotion ideas and the all important fundraising funnel through this important backbone of the program.

Communication is important too, especially when you get your booster club off and running. One great source for this is a website. Get a website coordinator who has a computer background and can design the most functional website for your program. This source of information is a great way to communicate and reach many people.

An additional good source of information is a newsletter. We send out a newsletter to every student in our school district in October just prior to the start of our wrestling season, all levels. This newsletter includes a schedule for signup and registration for youth, junior high and high school programs. It also includes review of last season's accomplishments, as well as recognizing key people they can contact in regards to whatever level of wrestling they want to participate in. We think this information also influences others to try our sport out too.

Once the season begins we distribute our annual Wrestling yearbook. This includes pictures of all the wrestlers who participate, as well as cheerleaders, managers, coaches, school administration, booster club officers, records, schedules for all levels and season outlook and reviews. We help fund this book with advertising from local businesses. These books are distributed to business lobbies, dentist and doctor offices, etc., throughout the community. Why not read about Owatonna Wrestling when waiting in a lobby for an appointment. It's a natural curiosity for people to look at something that involves the community rather than reaching for the typical magazine.

Another highlight each year, especially for our youth wrestlers, is the release of our annual trading cards. These cards include information about each of our returning lettermen. On special occasion we have specialty cards of faculty, custodians, coaches and more. It's a special recognition to be included on an Owatonna Wrestling Trading Card!

I can go on and on about the various things we've pursued to promote our wrestling program. Let me share more of them with you in the following list of ideas. Just remember, don't be afraid to try an idea your people come up with. I remember one year our junior high coach thought we could buy and raffle off a truck. The raffle was to be held at our annual Owatonna Open Wrestling Tournament in early April. It looked like we were going to lose hundreds of dollars on this idea until our coach took on the personal challenge of selling raffle tickets at the door. He showed off his tremendous salesmanship that day and sold over 800 tickets. Needless to say, we at least paid of f the truck. We even made a few bucks. It was worth the challenge. So, try some of these ideas out and help your program gain in popularity, numbers of participants, overall enthusiasm and many more wins than losses.

Promotion ideas:

1. Create a booster club.
2. Create a website for your program.
3. Have all of your meets aired on cable television and radio stations.
4. Establish a sportsmanship committee and let them establish consequences for behavior of wrestlers and fans.
5. Recognize past accomplishments in your wrestling room with pictures, plaques, etc.
6. Build a museum in your wrestling room, or nearby.
7. Establish some tournaments to raise funds and promote your programs. This also gets people in involved. More people bring more ideas and needed help.
8. Have a good post-season banquet to recognize wrestlers for their accomplishments.