

# **THE ROAD TO NATIONALS: Civic Memorial's Pazzazz dance team prepares for Universal Studios Florida competition**

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**BETHALTO** - For the first time since 2008, the Civic Memorial High School Pazzazz dance team will be heading to Orlando, Fla., to compete in the National Dance Alliance High School National Championships.

In preparation for the event, which will begin **Feb. 26**, coaches **Calvin Soong, Craig Wilson** and Pazzazz alumni **Kiana Stevenson** have been working tirelessly with their **13 dancers**, making sure each count of choreography, their floor presence and emotions are flawless.

The team consists of their captain **Abbey Little, Madi Korte, Mallory Griggs, Lauren Seidler, Kylee Zyung, Peyton Little, Cameryn Lee, Skylar King, Breann Jakich, Morgan Phillips, RayAnn Lawrence, Kaitlyn Depping and Sylvia Hughson.**

Pazzazz has earned **24 State Championship titles** ranging from 1989 to 2015 and are incredibly eager to showcase their talents on a national level.



“After doing so well at our state competition last year, winning all three categories we were in, we approached the parents at our meeting after our new team was selected and threw out the idea of heading back to nationals,” Wilson said. “In 2007, we won small pom and medium pom in 2008 at the MDDT USA Nationals. This year, we’re going to try three different categories at nationals.”

After earning their bid to attend nationals while attending **NDA’s Elite Dance Camp in July at Maryville University**, the Pazzazz team was faced with yet another challenge; paying for the trip.

Luckily for the dancers, the Bethalto community was more than willing to support their organization, taking a new approach this year with corporate sponsorships along with their other gracious donations from the community.

“The community has always been supportive,” Wilson said. “It’s always so expensive, especially when you compete in multiple categories. You have to have an outfit for each routine, entry fees, traveling. Our booster club has always done an amazing job supporting us and the community is so great to us.”

Headed into February, the team is very grateful to say that all of their fundraising needs have been met and even exceeded well before their deadline due to the enormous amount of support from those corporate entities and local businesses.

“The struggle now is getting the girls physically ready for the competition,” Wilson said.



Nationals will consist of a three days of grueling competition for the dedicated ladies of the team. Teams from all across the country will be displaying their talents in several



categories like jazz, pom, mix, kick and hip hop split into small, medium and large divisions. The Pazzazz Dance Team will be competing in the medium division in jazz, pom and mix.

With their rigorous practice schedule and unbreakable rules of conduct, the girls out on the floor at the competition have exorbitant amounts of discipline and skill added to not only their professional repertoire, but to their lives.

“Our goal is to develop these dancers into great and productive people on and off the floor,” Wilson said.

With the **Team Dance Illinois** organization taking a one-year hiatus from holding their annual competitions, the upcoming national competition is the only opportunity for Soong and Wilson’s team to make their mark for 2016.

Wilson also offers some excellent words of wisdom for anyone who wishes they could develop skills in either dance, sports or any other craft.

“If you have the heart and the commitment to want to devote your time inside and outside a rehearsal, you can be anything you want to be, regardless of what sport, art form. If you will train and commit to your sport, your art or craft, you can be anything and that’s what we tell these kids,” Wilson said. “The egos are dropped at the door with each single team that we choose. You are all the same and all have to become part of the sisterhood. You are a team.”

**Doneeta and Joanna Kallal** created the Purple Pazzazz, now known as The Pazzazz Dance Team, in the late eighties. Soong and Wilson had coached side by side with the ladies before they ultimately passed the torch to the two gentlemen.

**“Calvin and I have only wanted to keep their tradition and style of coaching alive throughout all of these years,” Wilson said. “We coach to this day as if they were coaching, very passionately, by the book and to keep these girls on the straight and narrow. We are blessed with the opportunity to keep their legacy going.”**

