

Dolly Joseph, aka the Schoolmarm, takes on Reagan Greenfield, aka Tragedy Ann, at a CLAW bout



lean on me

THE CHARLOTTESVILLE LADY ARM WRESTLERS ANSWER A CALL TO ARMS

CHEERING, SHOUTING, AND elbowing for space under a tent in a Charlottesville, VA, parking lot, 700 spectators are trying to keep their eyes on the match. But this isn't your average sporting event—it's a Charlottesville Lady Arm Wrestlers bout, and these fans are supporting women's charities while urging their fave competitors on.

It all started at a bar one night in the fall of 2007, when pals Jennifer Hoyt Tidwell, 39, and Jodie Plaisance, 41, decided to arm wrestle. Tidwell claims she "crushed [Plaisance] easily," and Plaisance demanded a rematch. Their friends soon wanted to get in on the action, too, so a few months later the Charlottesville Lady Arm Wrestlers (CLAW) hosted its first match. In the four years since, CLAW has grown to include 75 women who all adopt menacing pseudonyms and DIY costumes in much the same way roller derby girls do. At their quarterly matches, wrestlers with names like the Morton Assault Girl, Stiletto Southpaw, the Homewrecker, and Tragedy Ann arrive with costumed entourages who encourage onlookers to purchase "CLAWbucks" (one CLAWbuck for one dollar) to "bet" on the match. Then all the money raised—including cover charges, ringside seats, and T-shirt sales—goes to local women's organizations such as Books Behind Bars (which provides books to women's prisons) and SARA (The Sexual Assault Resource Agency).

To date, CLAW has raised over \$30,000, and with new chapters cropping up in New Orleans; Taos, NM; Chicago; Hudson Valley, NY; and San Francisco, that number is only expected to grow. "We're raising money to support women and that's what it's all about," says Plaisance. "It was just a silly idea, but it has made such a difference in our community, and now hopefully the nation." For more info, visit clawville.org. [CELIA SHATZMAN]