

IOWA CHEERLEADING COACHES' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



AUGUST 2024

www.iowacheercoaches.org



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope each of you has had a summer filled with fun, family, adventures, and some time to relax! Now it is time to get ready and excited for football games, pep rallies and Homecoming!

It is also time to think about what ICCA has to offer this fall. Every August, ICCA offers free clinics around the state. Then it is time to think about All-State tryouts, State Championships, and Honor Squad. I hope that you will consider giving one - or all - of these ICCA events a try! There is so much benefit to you and your cheerleaders. I always found that the time I got to spend with other cheer coaches during these events was one of the greatest benefits. And my cheerleaders always learned a lot and had a great time.

Not sure how to do this? Reach out to your district rep for information and help. Check out the ICCA website for lots of great information, too.

Here is to a great fall season!

Paula Kirkpatrick
ICCA President

Become an ICCA Member TODAY!

Go to the ICCA website (www.iowacheercoaches.org) and find the MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION button on the Home Page.

Remember: If you attended the Spring Coaches Conference in March, your membership is already paid. Membership covers all coaches within your individual school, including head coaches, assistant coaches, and junior high coaches.

National Anthem Singers

ICCA is looking for a singer or group of singers to perform the National Anthem at the State Championships on November 2, 2024. The performer does NOT need to be a cheerleader!! For more information, find the National Anthem application form on the ICCA website under the FORMS tab. Deadline is September 15. Contact Kenna at kennajohnson47@gmail.com with questions.

NEW RULES EMAIL

Got a rules question?
Need a stunt clarified?
Want to report a rules violation?
Email ASKICCARULES@gmail.com!!

FALL EVENT REGISTRATIONS

Honor Squad, All State Tryouts,
and State Championships
Opens August 12, 2024
Closes September 20, 2024

Why Coaches Need to Prioritize the Online Rules Meeting

~ Jordan Sytsma, Central District Rep. ~

As we gear up for another exciting season, I wanted to take a moment to chat about something that's crucial for all of us: the Online Rules Meeting. Whether you're a seasoned veteran or a newbie in the coaching world, attending this meeting is a must. Not only is it a requirement for participating in any ICCA event, but it's also key to running a safe and successful program. Safety First, Always We all know cheerleading is an intense sport. Our athletes push their limits, and it's our job to make sure they do so safely. The Online Rules Meeting is packed with the latest safety protocols and guidelines. It's not just about ticking a box—it's about protecting our cheerleaders from injuries. By staying updated, we can ensure our practices and routines are as safe as possible.

Professional Growth Let's face it—coaching is a never-ending learning journey. The Online Rules Meeting is a fantastic opportunity for us to brush up on our knowledge and learn about new developments in our sport. It's about more than just compliance; it's about growing as professionals and becoming better coaches for our athletes.

Event Participation Remember, attending the Online Rules Meeting is a non-negotiable if you want your team to participate in ICCA events. This includes some of the most exciting opportunities of the season:

- ▶ **Free Fall Cheer Clinics:** Great training sessions for both us and our cheerleaders.
- ▶ **All-State Tryouts:** Where the best of the best are chosen to represent our state.
- ▶ **State Cheer Championships:** The ultimate stage to display our team's skills and hard work.
- ▶ **Honor Squad:** Celebrate our standout athletes who excel in cheerleading and beyond.
- ▶ **All-Star Squad:** Showcase top talent and give our athletes a chance to shine.
- ▶ **Special Olympics:** An incredibly rewarding experience supporting athletes with special needs.

Let's Do This! So, as we dive into another season, let's make sure we're all on board with the Online Rules Meeting. It's a small commitment with huge benefits for our teams. Mark your calendars, log in, and let's set ourselves up for a safe, and successful season.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the events and cheering on our incredible athletes!

FREE FALL CLINICS

- **Central District - August 10 @ Gilbert HS**
- **NW District - August 10 @ Storm Lake HS**
- **NE District - August 10 @ Lincoln Intermediate, Mason City**
- **SW District - August 10 @ Winterset HS**
- **Central District - August 17 @ Ames HS**
- **NE District - August 17 @ West Delaware HS**
- **SE District - August 17 @ Washington HS**

Registration for the Fall Clinics is now open on the ICCA website Home Page!!

Remember: Coaches need to be ICCA members to attend. PLUS, you can attend any clinic that works for you!! (Doesn't have to be the District you're assigned to!)

Why Do I Need the NFHS Concussion Course?

~ Betty Lou Jones, All Stars Director ~

The NFHS Concussion course should be taken by all cheer coaches to help them educate themselves on the importance of how to recognize the signs and symptoms of a concussion, and what to do if you think your cheerleader (or anyone) might have suffered a concussion.

It is highly recommended for all coaches and mandatory if you are going to participate in one of the many ICCA events, such as State Championships, All-State, Honor Squad and All-Stars. Your school may also require it to lessen their liability.

Why should a coach be required to take it every year? Things change, and a coach needs to keep up with the latest updates and new information. It also helps with retention and understanding the consequences of a concussion and decisions related to them.

2024 ICCA STATE
CHAMPIONSHIPS
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2024

Why Do I Need the NFHS Concussion Course?

~ Dana Logan, Vice President ~

As we gear up for another exciting season of cheerleading, it's crucial to highlight a foundational aspect of our commitment to safety: the [free online NFHS Concussion in Sports Course](#) for coaches. This training isn't just a checkbox requirement; it's a vital step in safeguarding our athletes and ensuring compliance with essential guidelines.

Why is NFHS Concussion Training Essential?

Concussions are serious injuries that can have lasting effects if not managed properly. For cheerleaders, the risk of head injury is a real concern. NFHS concussion training equips coaches with the knowledge to recognize the signs and symptoms of concussions, understand the proper protocols for managing suspected concussions, and implement strategies to prevent these injuries.

During the NFHS concussion training, coaches delve into crucial topics such as:

- 1. Concussion Fundamentals:** Understanding what concussions are and how they occur.
- 2. Recognition:** Learning to identify signs and symptoms of a possible concussion.
- 3. Response Protocols:** Knowing how to respond appropriately when a concussion is suspected, including removal from play and seeking medical evaluation.
- 4. Return-to-Play Guidelines:** Understanding the steps and criteria for safely returning athletes to cheer activities after a concussion.

Mandatory for Fall ICCA Events In addition to promoting safety, completing the NFHS concussion training course is a mandatory requirement for coaches looking to register their teams for fall ICCA events. Every coach from your district that is registered as an ICCA member is required to complete the course, save the certificate of completion, and upload that PDF when registering for the State Championships, All-State tryouts, and Honor Squad. This ensures that every coach on the sidelines is prepared to handle potential concussion situations competently, fostering an environment where our athletes can perform at their best without compromising their well-being.

Online Rules Meeting + Concussion Training on NFHSLEARN.com

Coaches will be able to access the Online Rules Meeting AND the NFHS Concussion Training in ONE LOCATION!! We will be using NFHSlearn.com to document the completion of both of those trainings. More information will be available SOON!!

Sharp Motion Technique

~ Kristen Baker, Trustee ~

Motion technique is the core of good cheerleading. Every aspect of cheerleading can be traced back to good motion technique. Sometimes we get so concerned about the stunting and tumbling that we ignore the fundamentals, but those fundamentals are essential to the success of our performances.

We tell our cheerleaders to sharpen their motions all the time. We want to see them hitting their motions with perfect placement and taking the most direct route to get there. Sharp motions help with timing and with voice. How do we teach sharp motions? We have to use direct instruction and repetition to help cheerleaders develop strong motion technique.

So where do we start? Posture and stance. Cheerleaders need to stand up tall and engage their core muscles. Their stance should be slightly wider than their shoulders. Tight motions are achieved by actively thinking about and using the muscle groups required.

What's next? Correct placement. Cheerleaders have to know the correct placement of motions in order to make them sharp. Make sure everyone knows where to place a touchdown, a T, a high V or a low V, as well as other motions, and that everyone on the squad looks the same doing them. Watch for cocked or broken wrists, hyperextended elbows, incorrect angles, while making sure everyone looks the same doing the motion.

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After correct placement, we also need to teach how to connect motions to make timing better and the technique sharper. One of the best ways to connect motions is to travel the shortest distance. While some cheerleaders "swing" from one motion to the next, it is often difficult to get the timing correct, and can lead to softer motions. Some cheerleaders tend to "float" their motions, anticipating the change and sliding to the next motion. Again, this can lead to softer motions that are difficult to time. Taking the direct route from one motion to the next leads to sharper motions that have correct timing.

Once cheerleaders know the correct placement and timing, it is time to drill those motions into their muscle memory. It is often easy to become complacent and forget about motions while they are doing cheers. They have to be consistently doing drills either to counts or to cheers to keep them sharp and uniform in their technique. If you have access to mirrors, use them! Video your cheerleaders in small groups, as a team, or as individuals.

Why are sharp motions important in jumps, tumbling and stunting? When your cheerleaders all have a sharp consistent approach to all of these elements, their timing and uniformity will improve. Making their high Vs strong and the same before a jump, not only looks good, but it also helps keep them together. Bases who use sharp motions will have better timing and will make their stunts more consistent. Flyers who have sharp motions both while loading and executing the stunt, will hit the timing and will look stronger. Timing is essential to all aspects of cheerleading, and sharp motion technique helps with that timing.

Cheerleaders need strong, sharp motions in all cheer situations: leading cheers, performing the school song, or building that pyramid. Whether on the sideline or on the competition mat, sharp motions are essential to the success of your program.

Minor modifications have been made to the Game Time Spirit division at the State Championships. Go to the ICCA website Home Page and find the Update Game Time Spirit Information section.



Pack Your Coaching Bag

~ Angie Damman, Rep Council ~

It's time to pack your cheer coaching bag or bags because cheer season is here! If you're like me, there's always stuff you need for yourself as a coach and even more stuff for your cheer squad. Here are some essential items that can help you be prepared for your season, whether it's practices, games, or competitions.

✓ **Team Roster and Emergency Contact List:** Have a printed roster of your team members with their contact information and emergency contacts.

✓ **First Aid Kit:** This includes band-aids, antiseptic wipes, adhesive tape, gauze pads, disposable gloves, and any necessary medications for cheerleaders that have medication conditions.

✓ **Computer, Notebook, Planner, or Clipboard and Pens:** For jotting down notes, schedules, reminders, keeping track of important dates, events, and for recording attendance. Also, don't forget the computer charger!

✓ **Rules and Regulations Book:** Always carry your Cheer Rules Book National Federation Spirit Rules

Hair Spray, Hair Ties and Bobby Pins: For quick fixes and ensuring hair stays in place during performances, and games/meets.

Personal Care Items: Hand sanitizer, tissues, sunscreen, lip balm, nail clippers, feminine hygiene products and any other personal items you may need.

✓ **Cell Phone Charger:** Keep your phone charged not only for communication, and emergencies, but also for taking pictures and capturing the memories of your team. If you have a rechargeable one, even better!!

✓ **Portable Speaker:** For playing music during practices, warm-ups, and performances. (Have a USB drive or CD with backup music in case of technical issues with your primary music source).

✓ **Snacks:** Healthy options like granola bars, fruits, or energy bars to provide quick energy boosts during long practices or events. It also helps to keep some sugary snacks if you have any cheerleaders or coaches that may have a diabetic condition.

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Pack Your Bag...Continued from page 4

- ✓ **Extra Uniform Pieces:** Spare socks, bows, or uniform parts in case of emergencies or wardrobe malfunctions.
- ✓ **Competition Essentials:** Depending on the competition requirements, this might include makeup, extra bows, safety pins, and other competition-specific items.
- ✓ **Weather Protection:** Lightweight rain jacket or umbrella in case of unexpected weather changes, sunscreen, and hand/foot warmers are always nice to have for those chilly games.

By having some of these items in your cheer coach's bag, you'll be well-prepared to handle various situations and ensure smooth practices, successful performances, and safe experiences for your team. Additionally, consider the specific needs of your team and environment when packing your bag. It's also helpful to periodically review and update your bag to ensure everything is current and in good condition.



State Championships = Student Opportunities

~ Bethany Brink, All Stars Director ~

Summer is coming to an end and soon it'll be time for Friday Night Lights. Being a cheerleader and supporting the teams you cheer for is such a great way for students to be involved in their school and we have all heard how being involved can have a positive impact on student success. ICCA offers so many opportunities for cheerleaders in the state of Iowa, giving them even more ways to be involved. The Iowa Cheerleading State Championships gives cheerleaders the opportunity to perform and compete for themselves versus supporting another team on the sidelines. It is the opportunity to show their skills and the hard work they have put in as a team.

There are three categories you can compete in at the championships: Game Time Spirit, Cheer/Dance, and Stunt Group. If you are starting off, Game Time Spirit might be the place to start. This category is the closest to what your cheerleaders would be doing in a game day scenario: a time out cheer and your school's fight song. Stunt Group is a small stunt group, up to 5 cheerleaders, that performs stunts to music for one minute. When I have had teams compete in this category, we worked to have as clean of stunts

State Championships...Continued in next column

State Championships...Continued from previous column

as possible. Focus on execution, and build up your difficulty. The final category is Cheer/Dance. Cheer/Dance is two and a half minutes of cheering, dancing, stunting, tosses, pyramids, jumps and tumbling. You can use up to one and a half minutes of music as part of the routine. These routines are fast paced and so fun to watch!

You may be thinking that your team isn't ready to compete. I spent years with those same thoughts, but I eventually decided that by entering in the State Championships, I was giving my cheerleaders a new experience. We went into the first competition season without any idea how our Cheer/Dance routine was supposed to look, but we worked hard and went in with confidence. We did not place that first year, or for many years after, but I could ask any one of those cheerleaders what their favorite part of cheerleading was, and they would all say competition. Winning a trophy is definitely memorable, but you don't have to bring home hardware to give your cheerleaders a new experience. Take the leap and try competing. You've got to start somewhere, so don't let the fear of not winning be the reason you sit out another year. Give your cheerleaders the opportunity to have all the experiences possible.

FALL ONLINE RULES MEETING

August 5 - August 30, 2024

All coaches and choreographers must complete the Fall Online Rules Meeting, the NFHS Concussion training, and be registered ICCA members to participate in ICCA Events.

Questions? Contact the Executive Directors.

Spangles

Updated June 2024: Language regarding uniforms was changed to read:

Uniforms shall not have rhinestones, spangles/sequins, or bling on uniforms, warm ups, briefs, shoes, etc

When are Your Athletes Ready to Stunt?

~ Desiré Grismore-Jones, SW District Rep. ~

The oohs and aahs from the crowd when the squad hits a pyramid or sends baskets sky high is something all cheerleaders love to hear. How do we get our squads to that point and how do we know they're ready? Stunting seems to be a staple in the world of Iowa Cheerleading, but a lot of times it's done before the athletes are ready. So how do you know if your athletes are ready to move up from the sidelines?

You, as the coach, **must be educated**. You are asking these cheerleaders to put their lives in your hands and the hands of their teammates. You have to know how to coach them appropriately. There's lots of resources out there (especially lots of resources at the spring ICCA conference.) Search those out so that you're the expert. These kids are going to come in with videos they see on TikTok and it's up to you to know if your squad is ready to try those and if they're even legal to do under ICCA and NFHS rules.

Athleticism is key. Stunting is a very strenuous part of cheer that can be dangerous if the cheerleaders are not adequately prepared. Having good form and basic strength is key to being successful. This means getting those athletes in the weight room. The basic athletic stance that bases have to take, the ability to hold the body weight in the arms of a flyer and the shoulder and arm strength of a back base, can all be built in the weight room without the risk of hurting another squad member. And don't forget the core! Having a strong core is important for all cheer athletes, whether they're stunting, jumping or tumbling. The strength needed for cheer can be built in a weight training class or on their own time, but it's a great way to get some team bonding in as well.

Start from the ground up. This is meant both literally and figuratively. Have each stunting position know what they're going to do and practice it without an actual human either in their hands or underneath them. I use the big weighted medicine balls a lot for my bases so that they get their timing together and I can make sure they're not dropping their hands while remaining in an athletic stance. These medicine balls are also soft, so if it does happen to come down on them, they shouldn't get hurt. Fliers should know what they're doing as well. Can a flier hold their own weight in their arms (i.e. a hang drill)? If not, they're not ready

Ready to Stunt...Continued in next column

Ready to Stunt...Continued from previous column

to fly. It's not always the smallest or lightest that's the best choice for a flier. It's the one that can hold his or her own weight, stay tight, and have good body awareness and control.

Teach how to spot. Whether your squad is just learning how to step up on a double thigh stand or working to learn extended single leg stunts, spotting is key. Nothing hurts both physically and the overall confidence of a group more than falling from a stunt. Spotters should have their eyes on the flyer and know the basics of spotting while keeping themselves safe.

Work through the progressions. Once bases, backs, fliers, and spotters know what they will be doing, start with the basics of step up drills. This helps the base know how to hold his or her weight plus the weight of the flier: the flier how to drive straight up and lock out, and the back how to support the flier. Make sure each person knows what they are supposed to do when the stunt is going up and coming down. Every position should have the drill perfected before you move them on to the next stunt. Stunting is a progression and should be taken very seriously. It's super fun when those stunts stick, but it's certainly hard work getting there!

Partner Stunt Progressions

1. Step-up drills
2. Double-base thigh stand
3. Double-base shoulder stand
4. Single-base shoulder stand
5. Extension prep, step off dismount
6. Cradle drills
7. Extension prep, cradle dismount
8. Press extension, return to shoulders, cradle dismount
9. Press extension, cradle dismount
10. Full extension Step-up Liberty
11. Ground-up Liberty
12. Braced liberty tick-tock
13. Skills to cradles (i.e. toe touches and twists)
14. Basket toss drills ("rides")
15. Basket toss skill execution (i.e. toe touches and twists)

NOTE: No partner stunt should be attempted until each individual skill in the progression is mastered.

Distributing Uniforms WITHOUT a Meltdown!!!!

~ Bridget McWhorter, Rep. Council Member ~

Is it possible to distribute uniforms while remaining calm and under control? Of course it is possible!!! However, it may take some practice to get the process to be what you want it to be. After a while, you will be able to know what size most of the athletes should have without the assistance of a professional! Here are some tips & tricks that we use to help with our uniform distribution process, which starts early for us!

Have all cheerleaders sized in the spring or as early as you possibly can to ensure that you have the correct sizes for everyone on the team. We have the cheerleaders sized for uniforms when we have our uniform rep come to size the cheerleaders for their warm ups and other cheer items. We make sure that both our rep and we coaches have the sizes, so we can compare the list to our uniform inventory. We order any necessary sizes, so we are able to hand out the proper sizes come fall! You can also size your cheerleaders yourself with the uniforms that you have in stock.

Preparation is **KEY!!** We do a few things to help prepare for when we distribute uniforms.

- **Label Uniforms** - We use a fabric marker and assign a number to each uniform piece, so we can easily record who has what uniform number and size.
- **Spreadsheet** - We have a spreadsheet ready with uniform sizes & the number assigned to each piece, so we are ready to record who has which uniform piece.
- **Organize your uniforms!!** I know that not everyone is as fortunate as we are as we are able to hang our uniforms. We have the body liners, shells, and skirts hung up by uniform style and in order by size to make handing out uniforms easier. We can easily find the correct sizes. If you store your uniforms in totes, you can prepare ahead of distributing the uniforms by laying your uniforms out by sizes, squad category (if you have different uniforms for JV and varsity), and uniform pieces. It is easier to hand out uniforms if they are all organized and ready to go.

Proper uniform fit is a necessity as well! Before we distribute the uniforms, we tell the cheerleaders how

Uniforms...Continued on page 8

Homecoming = Stress Free

~ Cindy Pangburn, NE District Rep. ~

I can only guess, but I am sure many of you are thinking, "How can Homecoming be stress free?!?" I will share some of the ways I have found to make Homecoming stress free and more fun!!

We all know fall is a busy season. School has started, so you get less practice time with your cheerleaders, plus you have pep rallies, games and many of you are working on your competition routine. *How can Homecoming possibly be fun?* All it takes is some organization, and it can be one of the most fun weeks of your year!

How many of you have an actual Homecoming Week Checklist of things to accomplish?? If not, you need to make one! If you struggle remembering what all needs to be done, ask your senior cheerleaders to help you make the list. They may have great ideas you haven't thought of. A list of what needs to be done, and when, will help you stay on track, and it can help you delegate as well.

If you are a first-year coach, I encourage you to contact me, and I will be happy to give you a more detailed list of how to organize things. At my school, our planning actually begins in late July or early August.

Dress up days for Homecoming Week is a popular activity at NK. We have to have those days approved by our principal, so my cheerleaders make an appointment with him in early August to ensure their ideas are appropriate. They also get approval of all the games we play during our class competitions.

We make posters to advertise dress up days, which we hang in the school. We also have actual mannequins we dress to show the students ideas of what they can wear. We work with our guidance counselor to help advertise what goes on during Homecoming week and share it with the community, especially the parents so they don't have to run out at the last minute to get something for their student for dress up days.

We paint windows on the businesses downtown. I order paint in July so there is no last-minute scrambling. We also plan ahead what will be painted on each business's windows. If you are like me, and are not creative, find someone who is and have them come up with the ideas. I have a former cheerleader who loves that task, so she helps us every year.

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the uniforms should fit as it is not how they typically wear their clothes.

- ▶ The skirts are cut to fit correctly when the athletes have the waistline at their natural waistline, which is right above their belly button.
- ▶ The body liner should be a snug fit.
- ▶ The shell should also be a pretty snug fit. You want them to be able to jump, tumble, and perform motions, but you still want the fitted athletic look.
- ▶ If you have someone wearing pants, you will want to make sure they aren't too long because that could create problems during cheering.
- ▶ I have them try on the whole uniform and have them lift their arms to make sure they are wearing it correctly before they are allowed to take the uniform.

We then record the number that we wrote on the sheet and who has that particular uniform piece on the spreadsheet. We usually print a copy and write names in there. We do organize the spreadsheet by fall, winter, and competition to make it even a little more organized.



Homecoming...Continued from page 7

We have the opportunity to go to the elementary the morning of Homecoming and give every student a free face tattoo. The fundraising for that takes place in the first few weeks of school. The tattoos themselves are ordered in July.

We paint the car windows of high school students (there is a cost for this and it helps pay for the paint). We have a sign-up sheet in the office and students must prepay; when they pay, they also sign up for a specific time frame. Having an assigned time for each car to get painted saves so much time!

Plan ahead your pep rally for the week as well. This is something I completely turn over to my cheerleaders and let them run with it. Challenge them to come up with new ideas each year! Be sure to give them a deadline for their ideas, and you can take something off your to do list.

I encourage you to sit down as soon as possible and make your Homecoming Checklist! It may not be perfect the first year, but if you make it a work in progress, I guarantee Homecoming week will be stress free and a week you will always look forward to! I will be cheering for you.

PEP RALLIES - Are They Just Something of the Past?

~ Tiffany Speake, Rep Council Member ~

Pep rallies...I've heard lots of different opinions and rumblings about pep rallies. Some schools think they're an unnecessary distraction from classes and school work. (I once interviewed at a school who very proudly stated that they don't disrupt classes for things like pep rallies. As a cheerleading coach, this was a turn off to me and ultimately I turned down that job.) To me, pep rallies are a wonderful thing! And honestly, they are a necessary part in school spirit and unity.

One of the many responsibilities of being a cheerleader, and I'd argue the biggest part, is to instill school spirit and positivity into the school, students, and community. A great way to create school spirit and get all of the students involved is through the use of pep rallies. I do, however, believe that pep rallies can be overused and over done if your school has too many. There's a fine line in order to keep students interested so they're still effective.

That being said, there are multiple ways your school and/or you as a cheerleading coach can ensure pep rallies are successful. To start off, you need to make sure your squad is fully prepared, as well as making sure they buy into it first. If they're annoyed they're doing it, there's a good chance the student body will feel the same way. Make sure you're doing cheers that get the students involved and are potentially interactive as well. Use poms when you can, show off stunts if you can, and remind everyone why cheerleaders are important, fun, and full of positive school spirit! This is also a great opportunity to introduce that seasons' sports teams, programs, upcoming games/meets, events, and expectations for students attending them. Every once in a while you could even include a game or two that get students and potentially staff involved.

For reference, here is an example of just one of the pep rallies I've held in the past to start off our season: We start off with the band playing as students walk in, and then we start off with our school fight song. The cheerleaders start with a cheer everyone can interact with, and then we go back and forth between cheers and the sports teams getting introduced and inviting students to attend their events. Usually a stunt or two gets thrown in along the way as well. We also have a spirit stick rivalry we throw in! As the cheerleaders do "Battle Cry" the students compete to see which class

Pep Rally...Continued on page 9

can be the loudest. The teachers vote, and the winning class gets to be the holder of the spirit stick! (I made ours with a wood dowel and craft supplies from Hobby Lobby) The principal or activities director usually states expectations for the upcoming season, and then we end the pep rally with the school fight song again.

If you are on the fence on whether or not you should still be holding pep rallies, my vote and experience is "Yes! Keep having them!" When else does your squad get to instill school spirit and show off their skills in front of the whole student body?! Show them what you can do and why cheerleaders are so important! My one last piece of advice is to have an agenda set ahead of time, run through it with your squad so they know what to expect, and then share your agenda with anyone else involved (the principal, activities director, other coaches, etc.) Simply enjoy the chance to show off your school spirit!!



WHEN ARE CHEERLEADERS READY TO COMPETE?

~ Michelle McCann, NW District Rep. ~

As coaches, we love doing sideline cheer.. Our regular seasons are the basis of our sport, and it's typically the main focus of our jobs. One of the great opportunities we also have for our programs on top of regular seasons is to compete. Competing can be a great and rewarding opportunity for cheerleaders and coaches alike, but it can also be intimidating if you've never competed before.

There are pressures and expectations that come with competing that sideline doesn't necessarily entail, and not every cheerleader is always ready for that. So if you are wanting to compete with your program, how do you know your cheerleaders are ready?

The first and best thing you can do is talk to your cheerleaders. Ask them questions about what they want to do and let them be honest or transparent with you about their thoughts. I bet you'll find that there are a lot of kids that want to push themselves and would be willing to put in the extra work that comes with competing. If it helps, have a potential game plan and schedule that they can see should you decide to compete.

Next, think about the skills your program has. If you have a small group of strong stunters, think about

Ready to Compete...Continued on page 10

How to Make My Team's Jumps BETTER???

~ Amanda Waske, Rep. Council Member ~

One thing that often gets overlooked when preparing for your season or competition is jumps. They may seem like a minor detail, but especially in competition, they can make or break your team. After attending Coaches' Conference in April, and after losing points on our jumps in our state routine last year, I decided this is the year to start prioritizing jumps. The wonderful Morton Bergue offered so many great tips and tricks for improving jumps in a session at Conference in April. My squad has been putting these into action at our summer practices, and we are already seeing results.

The first thing to implement is consistency. Start every practice with a consistent jump warm up. We start with strength and flexibility drills. These include:

- * Standing leg lifts
- * Sitting leg lifts
- * V ups
- * Pike ups
- * Kicks
- * Splits
- * Wall sits
- * Wall splits
- * Partner toe touch sits
- * Tuck jumps

All team members do these together, and we let a new person lead every time. Once the drills are complete, we do a jump circle all together, offering feedback to each cheerleader.

Another way to improve jumps is the approach. Make sure that all of your athletes are consistently using the same approach, and all doing it the same way. Stress that arms are just as important as legs to improve jump height. Weak arms sacrifice height on jumps! No matter what approach you use, you should always go "all out" with your arms.

One change my team has made this year is never "faking" a jump in a routine, school song, etc. This makes every time you do your routine an opportunity to work on jumps. Athletes should be going all out on their arms and legs every time. This way, it becomes natural in the routine and isn't something you have to work on at the last minute.

Jumps Better...Continued on page 10

competing with a stunt group. If you have a large group of cheerleaders that are strong in multiple skills such as tumbling, stunting, dancing, etc., you might consider competing with a Cheer Dance routine. One of the best ways to start competing is with our newly revised Game Time Spirit division. Game Time Spirit utilizes many of the basic skills that come with sideline cheerleading - big crowd involvement, strong motions, jumps, etc. If your cheerleaders are strong sideline cheerleaders and they are willing to put in the extra work, Game Time Spirit would be a great place to start competing.

Keep in mind too that not every cheerleader has to compete. Some cheerleaders are perfectly fine just being regular season cheerleaders, so don't be afraid to separate the kids that either want to or can handle the higher pressure from the ones that maybe can't or just don't want to. Competing isn't for everyone! But be transparent and patient with your kids! Competing can really bring a team together, and even though it's tough, it can be FUN and REWARDING! If you want to compete, just do it! Start somewhere and just keep building year after year!



Jumps Better...Continued from page 9

Combo jumps are always a challenge for even the most talented teams, but are so important in competition routines. When teaching combo jumps, start with just the arms. Once your team's arms are solid, move on to doing the first jump all out, and the second jump as a pencil jump. After they've mastered that, add in the second jump. Once that's done, you just have to work on polishing synchronization and height!

They may seem like a minor detail, but jumps are a huge part of cheerleading and deserve as much work as cheers and stunts. If you implement a jump routine in your practice and stay consistent with it, your team's jumps will improve drastically. My athletes' jumps have improved already in a short amount of time. Work hard and stay consistent, and your athletes will be jumping sky high in no time!

BODY FLAGS

- No Body Flags allowed during stunting at any time (game, pep rally, performance, etc.)
- State Championships -- No Body Flags allowed in any division.

SHOULD MY TEAM COMPETE IN COED STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS?

~ Bridget McWhorter, Rep. Council Member ~

My question to you is "Why not?" Last year was my first year coaching at Jefferson, as well as my first year having male cheerleaders. It was a whirlwind of a season, and we achieved so much. I know that not everyone's story will be the same, but if you don't try, you cannot reach your goals!

In my previous ten years of coaching at a smaller school, I was not fortunate enough to have male cheerleaders. One of my male cheerleaders really wants to break through the stigma and misconception of what male cheerleaders have been known as in the past. My male cheerleaders took their first leap by joining the cheer team. They took the next step by attending camp on a college campus, and they were able to build relationships and skills through those college athletes.

After we left camp, they were still excited to keep building on their skills. It traditionally takes a lot to rebuild a program, which is what my assistant coach and myself were doing. Since we had so much to do, we put coed stunting on the back burner until after the first football game. The athletes asked to work on it more, so we started. We were able to have a former college male cheerleader help at a few practices. The athletes continued to work their skills and make adjustments.

Competition season was here before we knew it! The coed stunt group had success at their first competition, but we had things to fix before the next competition the following week. The group still earned a second place finish, which gave them motivation to work even harder in the week leading up to state. During that week, we revamped the entire routine thanks to some outside advice. The athletes had good feedback and had more belief in their skills. They pushed through so much that week, but in the end it paid off. Our coed stunt group hit their routine, and we experienced a high level of success!!

Winning was the ultimate goal, but we achieved so much more than a state title. The athletes in the coed group and in the whole program can see that the hard work does pay off. The athletes built relationships with athletes from other schools, mentors, college athletes, and so many others, which helped them see how

Should My Team...Continued on page 11

wonderful cheering in Iowa really is! They absolutely loved the support that their fellow cheerleaders from other schools gave them before, during, and after their performances. They showed their own school that they are more than sideline cheers and that males can play a key role in cheerleading.

Coed can bring more to your squad than you might have thought of before.

Team Bonding – Where to Begin

~ Franci McClenathan, At Large Rep. ~

With the many stresses that are on teens today, I have found creating more of a family atmosphere with my team is one of the most important things I, as their coach, can do for them. For my small squad, team bonding activities have become an important part of that. It has helped to build trusting relationships between them.

There are many types of team bonding including things like big sis/little sis, playing games at practice, having relay races or a scavenger hunt, movie night, team dinners, holding a lock-in, or doing a community service project together. Sometimes just sitting together and discussing life "stuff" is also a great way to bond.

Big sis/little sis can mean pairing an upperclassman with an underclassman or pairing an experienced teammate with a new teammate. Pairing them gives them an additional person they can feel comfortable going to with questions, especially when learning material at practices. Another fun idea is for them to leave each other positive messages in their cheer bag or in their locker throughout the season.

At practice we often do relay races during warmups. We divide into two teams and do lunges, crabwalk, forward rolls, etc, as a relay. Sometimes we add silly things just to get them laughing. It's awesome to hear them cheer for and encourage each other. Human knot is a good teamwork type game. Often you can also determine your natural leaders with this one, as you will see one or two kids take charge of how to get them untangled.

One fun bonding activity my squad does is a lock in at school. I reserve a gym and our wrestling room.

Team Bonding...Continued on page 12

Practice Attire – To Match or Not to Match??

~ Melissa Hatfield, Executive Director ~

With practices in full swing by now, uniforms handed out, cheers taught, and games scheduled you might be asking yourself the good ol' question of "Should my team have matching practice attire?" Honestly, I think either way you go is fine. Here are some great reasons why you could have your team wear matching practice clothes.

Having the same clothes on makes the team look as one. This makes it easier to clean up motions, cheers, and dances. When everyone wears the same thing, you aren't distracted by one person's bright pink tank top, for example. It's also easier to see formation breaks and what needs to be worked on more.

Team unity and bonding. Yes, your team could become more unified when they all have the same clothes on. It sounds simple, but this really helps with creating a culture of positivity within the team.

Having matching sets of clothes can come in handy for other events, not just practices. They can be worn together at fundraisers and other community events. You can also wear them as a team for town parades! Just remember to follow NFHS rules when it comes to hair, jewelry, and stunting.

If you don't want your team wearing their uniforms to school (they are expensive, I get it!) have them wear a matching set on game day! This could potentially help with growing school spirit and making sure kids know there is a game that night. This doesn't have to be just during football season. They can do it for volleyball games and/or cross country meets. Then, in the winter, switch it up with sweatshirts and warm up pants for basketball and wrestling. Have some fun with it!

Don't hesitate to ask other schools what they do or contact your uniform reps to see what they offer for practice clothes. This is also a great way to support a small business and get your sets from there!

**2024 Iowa Cheerleading
State Championships**

Saturday, November 2, 2024

Iowa State Fairgrounds – Jacobson Building

Each of the kids is asked to bring snacks to share, their blanket and pillow, and a positive attitude. We use this time to get to know each other better, to color posters for each season, work on sideline material, and finalize homecoming plans. We are lucky to have a pool at our school, so we also use it as an opportunity to try new stunts or just to get new teammates comfortable in the air without the powerful fear of falling.

Another special thing my team does is eat dinner together before every football game. They have lovingly named it "PGP" meaning pre-game party. I let them know upfront that it is always optional for them to host and provide the meal. There are some who do not volunteer, and that's okay because I never want them to feel obligated if their family situation doesn't allow it. I love watching them interact, especially after dinner, while they do each other's hair and makeup.

Each year I have girls who may not have the greatest biological family unit, so I think it's important to help them bond with each other and feel a sense of security, belonging, and family.

LESSONS LEARNED

~ Sandy Norby, At Large Rep. ~

The ICCA Board has many different women on the board from all over the state of Iowa. Each person brings to the board their own knowledge and experience. We learn from each other and grow into a board that wants to help all cheer coaches from across the state. As board members, we are all at different ages and stages of our lives. We come together as one, and therefore, are able to help cheer coaches of all ages. Whether they are older and seasoned coaches or the younger and new coaches that are searching for knowledge of the cheer world.

Betty Lou Jones has been on the Iowa Cheer Coaches Association Board since 1994. She is from Swea City, Iowa. She has coached at North Kossuth, North Central Kossuth, and North Union schools for a total of 39 years. Her roles as a board member have been as the Northwest District Rep and the North Central District Rep. She has also served many years as the All Star Director and more recently has been a member of the Financial Committee. You have probably seen her checking in cheerleaders at state wrestling

Lessons Learned...Continued in next column

and monitoring the mats. She helps at Honor Squad, State Championships, and helps with anything that is needed at the annual cheer conference held in the spring. She has worn many hats over these years.

I asked Betty Lou what changes she has seen over the years, since when she started coaching. When she started coaching there was not an Iowa Cheer Coaches Association Board. The many opportunities the ICCA has given over the years to coaches and cheerleaders has grown. We now have an annual cheer conference to educate coaches and cheerleaders. We have a state competition, free clinics, Honor Squad, All State and All Stars. We now have online rules meetings, which has made cheerleading safer. The National Federation rule books are provided to the cheer coaches and we have rules meetings each year to help with the rule changes. Cheerleading has changed so much in her years of coaching. The opportunities for cheerleading have grown. Jumps, motions, and stunts have improved, and cheerleaders are now more of an athlete.

The advice Betty Lou has for new coaches is to **get educated**. GO to the ICCA Conference. READ the ICCA newsletter, TALK to other cheer coaches and TAKE your cheerleaders to the free clinics in your district in August. (Information is on iowacheercoaches.org website.) Let them tryout for All State and All Stars. Get your cheerleaders involved!"

FREE FALL CLINICS

Saturday, August 10

- * **Central District:** Gilbert High School
- * **NW District:** Storm Lake High School
- * **NE District:** Lincoln Intermediate School, Mason City
- * **SW District:** Winterset High School

Saturday, August 17

- * **Central District:** Ames High School
- * **NE District:** West Delaware High School
- * **SE District:** Washington High School

9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Registration for the Fall Clinics is now open on the ICCA website Home Page!!

Remember: Coaches need to be ICCA members to attend. PLUS, you can attend any clinic that works for you!! (Doesn't have to be the District you're assigned to!)

**ICCA Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Sunday June 2, 2024 9:30 am
Bertha Bartlett Library, 503 Broad Street, Story City**

Call to Order: President Paula Kirkpatrick called the meeting to order at 9:32 AM. Members in attendance included: Paula Kirkpatrick, Dana Logan, Melissa Hatfield, Kristen Baker, Sandy Norby, Michelle McCann, Franci McClenathan, Cindy Pangburn, Kenna Johnson, Betty Lou Jones, Bethany Brink, Tami Doyle, and Jordan Sytsma. Desiree Jones and Erin Taylor were not in attendance.

Minutes of January 2024 meeting: Motion to approve by Jordan Sytsma, seconded by Franci McClenathan. All in favor, motion passed.

Membership report:

Schools: 115
Coaches: 258
Other: 1 college

Financial Report:

Checking: \$49,861.50
Savings: \$25,437.60
CD: \$28,400.56
Investment: \$17,802.89

Conference: We are closer to getting all invoices from the conference paid. (Printing costs from IHSAA are outstanding.) Online system through Alyssa is sometimes difficult to get exact numbers for each program.

Addition to Agenda: President Kirkpatrick shared a resignation from Erin Taylor - offering to continue as a board member or continue mentoring Jordyn Sytsma in the role of Ethics Director. After board discussion, it was proposed to accept her resignation as of December 31, 2024. This way, she is a board member while mentoring Jordyn through the busiest time of the Rules Interpretation job. Discussion of creating an ICCA gmail specifically for rules questions was decided to proceed. Jo Wesselmann made the motion to accept her resignation as stated above. Sandy Norby seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Executive Directors' Report:

● **Conference:**

- We had about 135 registrations this year (numbers down). Additional expense with sign language interpreters. Learned a lot about facilitating interpreters.
- 2025 Theme: Garden Theme/Tea Party
- Cancellation policy: we currently withhold \$50, which doesn't even pay for the meals. Cancellations made after the registration deadline, ICCA will keep the \$50 membership fee plus \$75. Cancellations made the week of conference there will be no refund.
- Kenna Johnson will meet with Gateway on July 1 in reference to moving the conference back to Ames. We are already scheduled with Hilton Garden Inn in Johnston for 2025.

● **State Championships - Nov. 2, 2024**

- This year, the State Cross Country Championships will be the same day. 1A will run during the morning and 2A in the afternoon. It was decided to keep our day as scheduled.
- Vendors - Cheer Buttons & Bows inquired about being a vendor at State. There are no restrictions set by the State Fairgrounds. It was decided to not have any additional vendors
- Game Time Spirit - Melissa Hatfield, Kenna Johnson, and Jordan Sytsma will work through any changes and communicate these to coaches by July 1. There may have to be some wording changes in our paperwork to reflect the style we are leaning towards
- Electronic Scoring - Melissa Hatfield has been in touch with Illinois judges about what they use. (Tourneywire)

Board Meeting...Continued on page 15

We are also consulting with Missouri (Tom Reynolds-Google). This is a potential area to pursue to help eliminate errors and help both our judges and tabulation workers. Jordan Sytsma talked about Accuscore at Nationals and Triton Challenge.

- No change in Championship fees for next year.
- **Items for the ICCA Executive Board/IHSAA Meeting - July 8**
 - Honor Squad-practice times and locations; add to informational letter for cheer coaches that they can bring in a bag with hair spray, etc.
 - Wrestling-lanyards were fine.
 - Basketball Tournament halftime performances; Are we going to be limited to Monday and Tuesday again?
 - Note: Girls Wrestling will be going to two classes.
- **State Basketball**
 - We are seeing more teams without cheerleaders. Why? Because of travel? Lack of participation? Lack of funding? Is there anything we can do about it?
 - 6 + 1 rule game cheerleaders
 - Do we need to modify it? Sparkles?
 - If yes, how would that look? This year, we had a school with Sparkles cheerleaders that were allowed to come out during quarter, but they still had to maintain the "six on the floor at a time" rule. (Only one Sparkle cheerleader actually attended.)
 - Let IHSAA decide how many they'll let in free.
- **Nominations for Award Winners** - some are specific, some are not.
 - Alignment of requirements for nominations, including length of letters.
 - Coach of the Year - 3 letters, one of which needs to be AD or administrator; one from a current or former cheerleader, one from the nominating ICCA member (plus the nominating member also fills out the form.)
 - AD/Administrator of the Year - 3 letters, one of which needs to be another administrator; one from a current or former cheerleader, one from the nominating ICCA member (plus the nominating member also fills out the form.)
 - Contributor of the Year - one to two letters of recommendation from an ICCA member.
 - Sportsmanship - one letter of recommendation from an ICCA member.
 - Friend of Cheerleading - one letter of recommendation from an ICCA member.
 - All recommendation letters are to be a single-page or less in length.
- **Uniform Clarifications:**
 - Rhinestones VS Spangles - Cheer uniform requirements and recommendations - add "Sequins/Spangles" to the description in ICCA materials. Kenna Johnson made the motion; Bethany Brink seconded. All in favor, motion carried.
 - Bows - currently allows small rhinestones/spangles professionally adhered or heat pressed, not glued or hot-glued on. Wording will be made consistent to read "professionally adhered."
 - Body Flags - Add "No Body Flags" to all divisions to State Championships - Melissa Hatfield made the motion to add "No Body Flags" to State Championship materials. Michelle McCann seconded; was amended to "No Body Flags during any stunting at all times during seasons." All in favor; motion passed.

Financial Committee

- Executive board decided to not add anyone to the Financial Committee at this time. More information about this will come. (The Financial Committee was technically not ever board approved as far as their role in determining salaries, length of terms, etc.)
- Recommended by the Financial Committee to raise our mileage amount to \$.53 starting on July 1,2024. Cindy Pangburn made the motion to raise our mileage amount from \$.50 per mile to \$.53 per mile.; Franci McClenathan seconded. All in favor, motion passed.
- Recommended purchasing a new Ipad for All-State. JoEllen Wesselmann made a motion to purchase a new Ipad and case with a \$500 limit for the All-State program. Jordan Sytsma seconded. All in favor and motion passed.
- Salaries - Kenna Johnson had asked for a 3% raise as the Financial Manager (to \$3215) and 3% for the Executive Director position (to \$14,435). Melissa Hatfield did not ask for a raise (currently \$9,341). Motion to

Board Meeting...Continued from page 14

go into closed session at 12:51 by Cindy Pangburn, seconded by Franci McClenathan.

- Session opened at 1:03 pm.
- Jordyn Sytsma proposed that we accept the financial committee's recommendation for raises: 3% for Kenna's positions as executive director and financial manager, 0% for Melissa. Cindy Pangburn seconded. Motion passed through paper ballot.

Rules: Rules meeting - opens Aug. 5 and closes Aug. 30, which is in alignment with the football rules meetings.

Rep Council report: There are currently four members comprising our Rep. Council. In reference to this year's conference, the members stated they enjoyed Morton and Abby. The sessions with board members helped them feel that they got to know board members better. The conference site was great. It was suggested they would have liked a longer session on Game Time Spirit division. They suggested trying to find a way to make it easier to see demos in sessions. They liked the Q and A Table, but didn't know it was happening ahead of time. It was suggested that a possible session might be something about postseason: what happens at state wrestling, basketball, etc. (Postseason 101?) The Rep Council members volunteered to help with next year's banquet centerpieces!

District Reps reports/free clinics: All clinics/dates and/sites are posted on the calendar on the website for their August dates.

Website: People need to update information on their programs. Send to Kenna Johnson asap.

Social Media: Send photos to Paula Kirkpatrick and Desire Jones for Facebook and Instagram.

Honor Squad: Tami Doyle presented Honor Squad Financial Report. This year the program made a profit which balanced out the previous year's deficit.

- Discussed requirements for the routine for the choreographer.
- College Combine is on the same day as the Honor Squad practice.
- Coaches will sign up for the meal on their registration. This will help decrease the number of uneaten lunches.
- There are still issues with practice space. Kenna will discuss it with IHSAA at the July meeting.
- Coaches did receive links for photos. Discussed photography issues. Some don't want to purchase. Tami will look into options for other photographers.

All State: Tryouts will be held October 12 and 13th, 2024, at Ames Middle School. Michelle Barlas will choreograph one more year. We will need to find a choreographer for the following year. Discussed job application criteria. We may need to change a practice date.

Discussed the October tryout dates with conflicts with other competitions. We will discuss further at the next meeting.

All Stars: This year we had 51 cheerleaders. There was a fun snowstorm, but everyone got there; it did cause them to start late, but everything worked out. Found a new vendor for uniforms which worked out well. There were only 50-60 videos submitted this year, versus 90 the previous year. District reps will promote the program at fall clinics.

Special Olympics: 14 schools were involved. They had 49 cheerleaders perform. There were around 30-40 Special Olympians involved with the performance. The routine went well. Michelle sent out the words to the cheer in advance, which helped. They did not provide tshirts this year which Michelle was told about. Bethany and Dana helped also.

New Business

- Appoint financial manager - Dana Logan moved to appoint Kenna Johnson as financial manager. Michelle McCann seconded. Approved.
- Next meeting - October 6th at Story City.

Motion to Adjourn was made by Kristen Baker. Seconded by Sandy Norby. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 1:44 PM.



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All State, Awards, Conference, State Championships, IHSAA Cheer Safety, Membership, Trustees

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