Open Letter to a New Cheer Parent

**By**[**Leslie**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/author/leslie/) |  **[Blog](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/blog/)**, [**Parents**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/parents/) |  03 October 2014  | [**Add Comment**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/parents/open-letter-new-cheer-parent/#respond)

Hello my overwhelmed friend,

Your child starts a new team today. As the coach takes your child to introduce them to their new team, let me introduce you to yours. Yes, you are part of a team. It is a very exclusive group of parents who all have the one thing in common – all of our kids cheer.

****We call ourselves “The Cheer Family.” You can’t miss us. We are crazy, loud, energetic, and usually wearing gym colors or merchandise. See that little girl who just got her handspring? Every person in the lobby will cheer for her and praise her as she leaves today. See that older child struggling? You will hear at least one of us give them some words of encouragement before they go home. We are the cheerleader’s cheerleader. You are now one of us. Welcome aboard!

I know there are so many details. Uniforms, make up, hair, bows and yes – you will have to learn that cheer that your child is now chanting over and over repeatedly in the car. Don’t worry. We will help you through it all. It is a lot to remember. We all need help at some point. That is why we are a team. A team of moms, dads, grandparents, and friends who work together. We treat every child on the team as our own. Need a hair tie for practice? One of us has a bundle hanging on our blinker lever. Forgot a water bottle? Someone will have a spare in the trunk, or money for the machine. Can’t pick up on time? When you get to the gym look for your child to be in the middle of a group of kids gabbing away with one of us watching and waiting patiently. It is what we do. We are The Cheer Family. We take care of our cheerleaders.

****Look for us. Get to know us. Exchange phone numbers, emails or Facebook ids. Ask questions. We have no problem demonstrate doing hair and make up a few weeks prior to competition. We can show you tips on how to be sure that big, 3” wide bow gets in the hair so it won’t fall out.   We can teach you to use Bounce to get rid of hair static and how to loop the laces so they don’t hurt the ankles.

We have all been new to a gym or sport at one point in time. We know how you feel. Please look for us. We are so happy you chose to be a part of our program. We want your child to have fun. We want you to have fun. And never fear, we have a crazy colored shirt with the gym logo just in your size. Trust me, you will want it before long. This sport is about spirit – and this spirit is addicting.

*Claire Brundrett is a mom of 3 athletes in various sports. A cheer mom of over eight years, she has experienced moving to different states, changing from a big gym to a small gym, and supporting competition and performance teams, in both school and all-star cheer. Claire continues to stay in contact with former cheer moms over the years as well as present cheer moms in her home gym and surrounding areas to gain inspiration not only in the cheer world, but beyond.*

Welcome to the World of Cheerleading

**By**[**Sunni Wheeler**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/author/sunni/) |  **[Blog](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/blog/)**, [**Parents**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/parents/) |  15 October 2014  | [**Add Comment**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/parents/welcome-world-cheerleading/#respond)

Dear Cheer Parent,

Welcome to the World of Cheerleading! You are in for an amazing journey full of glitter, bows, and spirit sticks. Whether your girl is cheering for games or bringing it on the competition floor, the sport of cheerleading is glad to have you as a part of our growing family.

****The first thing you need to do is get familiar with the rules for your cheerleader’s team. Every program is different. A recreational cheer team is going to be much different than an All Star competitive team. There are going to be rules specific to your team (such as a dress code, behavior code, and practice rules) and rules set by the governing body for your program. Those rules will cover the types of stunts and cheers allowed, and if competing, routine time limits and requirements. You don’t need to memorize them, but they will help you understand the sport better. If your daughter is competing, it will definitely help you see why one team may score higher than another.

Even though she will have teammates and coaches, the most important thing to remember is YOU are her biggest cheerleader. She is going to be learning to jump, tumble, stunt, dance and yell. Beyond that she is going to be learning how to trust – trust herself and her team members. She is going to be learning how to be a part of her new cheer family. She is going to fall many times, so she needs someone to help her get back up. She is going to get bumps and bruises. She is going to need someone to comfort her. She is also going to need someone on the sidelines, cheering for her. That person is you.

You’re going to need to learn a new language! Herkies and preps and pendulum swings – sounds like you’ve landed in a foreign country! Everything is going to be exciting and new to your cheerleader so learn her language so you can talk to her about it.

She’s going to need stuff. Oh, the STUFF! Shoes, bows, socks, skirts, shells. And then practice shorts, shirts, camp outfits. And a bag to put it all in. Yes, cheerleading is expensive! It’s going to be important for your cheerleader to sport her team colors, so support her in that! Don’t forget to buy your spirit wear too! It’s important that your cheerleader fundraise and help earn some of the money for all the stuff. It will help her feel more team spirit and she will value her accomplishments all the more.

If you can volunteer to help, please do so. The teams need a lot of family support! You can make cookies or small gifts for the team, help with fundraisers and organize a parent spirit group. At the cheer competitions the crazier and more spirited the parents are, the better! So don’t be afraid to break out the light-up sign and the noisemakers. They are cheering their hearts out for you, and they will feel so much more confident knowing you are supporting them from the sidelines.

****Although cheerleading isn’t quite like it is depicted on reality TV shows, it does come with its share of drama. Do what you can to diffuse it, and certainly don’t add to it! The other girls on her team are her teammates, and they all shine or they all fall together. There are going to be bases, flyers and back spots. Each one is unique and important! Please don’t push for your daughter to be one or the other. Allow the coach to do his or her job. Whatever role she is in, help her to see how important she is to the team.

You are also going to be her biggest advocate. Not all cheer programs are fair, and not everything they do is in line with your values. It’s unfortunate, but true. Keep an eye on the outfits, the way the coach treats the cheerleaders, the way the girls treat each other, the type of dance moves and the other parents. Don’t be pushed into anything you’re not comfortable with, or your daughter isn’t comfortable with. There are a lot of different programs around, so make sure you’ve chosen one that fits who you are.

Finally, enjoy this adventure. There is nothing like cheering under the lights, hearing the crowd yell and your heart beating to the music. It’s an experience your cheerleader will always remember. Your heart will be beating as hard as her’s. Cherish the moment.

*Sunni Wheeler is a cheer coach, cheer mom, and a former cheerleader. She started an All Star team at her local park district and they are in their 5th year. She also coaches a competitive tumbling team. She has been coaching gymnastics and cheer for 25 years!*

*Years ago she wrote a column for Suite101 about cheerleading. She has a background in advertising copywriting and journalism, and retired from that after 10 years in the business so she could spend more time with her family.*

*She has a new baby daughter and is coaching less this year in order to be home with her. She really loves helping other cheerleaders and their families so writing blogs is a good way to stay connected with the Cheer World while she stays home with her baby.*

How to Get Volunteers!

**By**[**Pam S**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/author/pswope/) |  **[Blog](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/blog/)**, [**Education**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/education/), [**Industry**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/industry/), [**Parents**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/parents/) |  13 July 2015  | [**Add Comment**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/industry/get-volunteers/#respond)

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How many booster clubs, organizations, committees, and groups struggle each year to get people to actually volunteer for the events you hold?  How many have to make it MANDATORY or offer some sort of “reward” to get anyone slightly interested?

We are not alone, friends of the cheer world!  I recently took the position of Treasurer on my daughter’s elementary school’s PTO, and what is their number one issue?  YEP – getting volunteers!  Meetings themselves are sparse at best, with the officers and maybe one other parent besides the three teachers and principal that attend!  I am sure that many gym’s meetings look somewhat similar to that!  When I took the treasurer’s position, I gained access to a website built specifically for Parent Teacher groups, and it is a TREASURE TROVE of information!  But the stuff that truly caught my eye were their suggestions for getting (and keeping) volunteers.  They have a ton of it!

I was reading through a bunch of different articles and finding so much helpful information that is so BASIC!  The number one reason that people don’t volunteer is that they are afraid of the time commitment.  In the world of cheerleading, there is already a HUGE commitment on the part of families getting their athlete(s) to practices, special events, bonding sessions, as well as competitions!  And then a booster club or organization comes along and wants MORE time?  YIKES!!  They all run for the hills!  And can anyone blame them?  For those of us blessed enough to be officers on those clubs and organizations (I was an officer on our gym’s booster club at one time), we end up carrying all of the weight and putting in all the work for Sally Sitsalot’s daughter to get the very same benefit that your daughter gets, and YOU put in all of the time and work!  It is very frustrating!!****

Getting people to be interested in volunteering is a great way for you to truly check your systems and figure out what YOU as an organization can do to make the experience better.  Some places have a specified amount of hours that are required for parents to volunteer, others have “buy outs”, still others have projected goals that if they are reached they don’t have to do any more fundraisers. . .  There are so many things out there.  But nothing to truly address the issue at heart – why be afraid to volunteer?

I can answer that.  You get “sucked into the black hole of volunteerism”.  You end up helping out with one event, and then they are calling you because you stepped up once, and since no one else will. . .  And you did such a great job. . .  And we really could use you. . .  It’s been done.  And it gets tired after a while.  But working to assure that your organization is not “the black hole” is a huge start.  Break tasks up into shifts, and give them time limits.  “We need to set up this fundraiser, and it will take us about an hour for set-up.  Who can help us out starting at 9am?”  The ones that come and help, when 10am hits, let them leave.  Even if you are not done, you make a guarantee to be done in an hour.  If you aren’t that is poor planning on your part, and others will have to help out.  Don’t ask them to stay (even though you will be very tempted to ask), just thank them for their time, and make sure they feel appreciated for giving you that hour, and send them on their way.  What you have done there is shown them respect for their time given, shown them that they are able to give what they can (not everyone is able to stay all day), and showed them you appreciated the work they did do.

Another thing you can do?  Preplan.  How many volunteers have shown up at an event they promised time to, only to find that no one seemed to know what was going on, no one was truly in charge, and everything was crazy?  What that says to a volunteer is that the organization is truly unorganized!  You expect this person to give up a few hours on their weekend – their “family time”; their “off time” – to come and work for you.  Show them the courtesy and respect to have a plan in place, a job for them to do, and either direction on how to do it or someone that can work with them and show them how to do it.  When people volunteer their time, they want to feel like it was time well spent.  If they come and for two hours do tons of work and it is noticed, they will most likely come back and do it again.  If you have an organization to the event, they will be much more likely to come and do what you need.  It is true – so many volunteer and walk up to someone and say, “What do you want me to do?”  Well, if you have a planned out event, you will have their answer, and will not look foolish trying to find them something to do.  Sit down beforehand and list the jobs that need to be done, list shifts for each job, and list who is doing what for that job and how many you will need.  No one likes to volunteer and be told they are doing one thing and come to find out there are thirty others doing the very same thing and it is truly a job that takes maybe three to do.  How many cashiers does one need at a brat fry at a time?  How many people manning the grill?  How many serving the food?  Examine the tasks and how many can do it and for how long.  Don’t expect anyone to be there the entire time – set up shifts.  People are much more willing to give two hours rather than eight.  That way they can schedule their day, do other things and still take part in the event without worry.

Along with that preplanning, you should at the beginning of each year send out a survey for families.  What interests them?  What can they offer you as an organization?  Can they offer only three hours the entire season or can they offer you a lot more?  Find out what they like to do.  You might have a mother that works weekends and can’t physically attend the event, but she might be able to do some of the pre-planning for you.  She might be able to type up letters, create brochures, or signs for the event.  Maybe you have a dad that loves to grill and is willing to do that for a cook out or sale.  Maybe there is a parent that with their job travels a lot, and they know how to get the deals with hotels, so they can do the blocking for competition season for hotels?  These are all jobs that people don’t always think of handing off, but can easily be done.  Figuring out the type of volunteers you have is a great way to arrange your tasks through the year and get EVERYONE involved.  Maybe you have a person that is a whiz at social marketing?  Get them to handle your Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts to promote upcoming fundraisers!  What if you have someone that is great at photography?  Bam – you have your promo pictures to use for advertising, brochures, posters, flyers, signs. . .  It is about getting people to do what they are interested in.  People will volunteer to do things they enjoy doing if they are able.  There is no law that says the officers have to do all of that work!  They do enough with meetings, planning and scheduling!  Let parents help out!!

It is something easily forgotten, but something that is so very essential.  Thank your volunteers!  Don’t just put out a blanket statement “Thanks to everyone that helped out on Saturday!”  Make it personal and quickly!  Send them an email, “Sue, Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy Saturday to help us set up that hot dog sale at Walmart!  Those tables looked great when you were done with them!  We truly appreciate it!”  A few seconds, it was personal, and you thanked the volunteer for a specific job done – recognition!  It is a great way to make people truly feel appreciated for the work they put in.  Even if it is a person that taped signs up, set up the cash box, organized the coolers, or whatever!  Every task is important, and everyone wants to be appreciated for what they gave.  It is so simple to do.  Don’t just thank those that did HUGE jobs; thank the ones that did the small ones as well.

In discussing the jobs at hand, there are some jobs that aren’t that much fun to do.  Let’s face it, it is so much more fun to take the money than it is to just stand there and get the food ready for the customers.  But each job has its necessity.  Nothing is too small for anyone to do.  Some might feel that way when you give them the job, but what you should be doing is getting them to “buy into the outcome”.  Help them have a vested interest in what the job will do for the entire project.  “Yes, you are just making signs, but without those signs no one would know where we are at and what we are selling!  The flashier you make them the more people are going to look at them and the more interest in our sale they will generate!”  You just got a person making signs to be a part of the success of the sale itself!  Everyone has that interest in the sale – show them how their job is just that important!  Along all of this, you should communicate how things are going during the event.  “Guys!  We just brought in another $100 this past hour!  Woo hoo!  Let’s see if we can double that next hour!  We only have three hours to go and we have our goal in reach!”  When there are goals, people are going to enjoy the challenge of working towards them!  If you just say you are selling something, they are just going to sell.  If you say you are looking to raise $1,000 with this one sale so let’s push to sell $200 per hour, people are going to work towards that!  Make it a game – see which shift makes the most in sales!  Give them a prize for winning!  It can be as small as a pin or ribbon saying they were first place, to a $5 Starbucks Gift Card!  Plan on making things fun, worth their time and get everyone involved in the outcome of things!

Something that many organizations forget about at the end is asking their volunteers for feedback on the event!  Was it worth running?  How can we make it better?  What can we do without?  What do we need for next time?  Was your job rewarding?  Did you feel your time was put to good use?  How many people do you think could work per shift next time?  All of these questions are great for those working to respond to!  They can do nothing but give you an opportunity to better your event, make people feel involved and like they have a voice in how things are done, and gives you first-hand experience of what worked and what didn’t.  Don’t be bull-headed and think that your way is the best way!  Try new things.  Maybe a different layout for the sale might be the answer to things?  Quite possibly having fewer people or running it for a shorter time frame might be the way to make more money!  Maybe we don’t need as many hot dogs next time, but more hamburgers would score huge!  So many things that can only be offered up by a person that was there working.  Feedback – as harsh and personal as it can be at times – is the best way to make changes and improvements.  Don’t just ask for it, but HEAR their answers.  Maybe three people suggested one change – recognize all three of them for the idea with a tag of “great minds think alike, and Alex, Mark and Sherry all had this AMAZING idea. . .”  You don’t have to do it for every idea given, but some that might be a huge change, give them the kudos for the idea!  Let them be the ones that own it.

Something that many different organizations don’t think about but it would be a great addition to things is a “volunteer coordinator” chairperson.  They are responsible for the events, getting volunteers, getting everyone interested, and the thanking them afterwards.  They should work with the officers on planning and spending, but they should be the contact person and the one coordinating the event so that there is one person that is “in charge” at that point.  They can do schedule changes, fill in quick or get someone to, or work with the officers on pre-planning the event set up and getting the jobs together and ready for the volunteers.  The more work that is put into things, the more organized it will be and the more appreciative (and willing to come back) will your volunteers be!!

When you talk about recognition and thanking people, it doesn’t have to be extravagant, expensive or huge!  Sometimes a simple thank you card hand written by the volunteer coordinator or an officer might be the ticket.  Sometimes a goofy way to recognize others might be the way to go!  Here are some great (and inexpensive) ideas:

1. Chocolate says it best – pass out Hershey’s Hugs or Kisses to volunteers as you thank them for braving the rain and cold selling burgers and hotdogs!!  Simple, yet a way to say “we love our volunteers”!
2. You’re a “Lifesaver” – Give out some Lifesaver candies to thank the volunteers!  Maybe you had a few volunteer at the very last minute because of a family emergency, or someone stayed extra of their own accord to cover a shift that was empty!  Keep them on hand to give to those people during the event with a cute little card stating they were a “Lifesaver”.
3. A picture is worth a thousand words! – Take pictures during the event!  Post them out and share how much fun everyone is having, who is there, and what they have done for the event!  Give them shout outs!  Maybe you have a goofy picture of the person operating the grill burning a burger – share the laugh and make it about the fun!  Make an album at the end of the year for the gym to have on hand so that people sitting and waiting for their athletes can look through and remember or get energized to help out with events in the future!
4. Say it NOW – don’t wait a month or two to send a card or note.  The event was on Saturday?  Get those thank you’s out starting on Sunday and Monday!!!  Make them sincere and personal!  Email, small card, a note, a small token. . .  Whatever you feel you would like to do!  Just do it NOW rather than LATER!
5. Luck of the Draw – Got a huge event to set up for?  A showcase, a rummage sale, or some other large event?  Hold drawings for small prizes for those volunteering!  Give them an entry for each hour they are spending at the event working!  5 hours of work will get you 5 changes in the drawing of your choice!  Have multiple prizes, or just one large one!  Ask a local business if they would be willing to donate something (it can be smaller, as you are not looking to raise money with this drawing).  Make sure you thank the business publicly for the donation, as well as take a picture of the winner of the prize with their prize and post it out for everyone to see, thank the business as well as the winner for volunteering!!
6. A token of thanks – Those small things that you can say thank you with!  Coffee mugs, pens, buttons, note pads or other things that you can use!  Give those out to each person that works a particular event!  Maybe you thank the people that set up the book fair with a small book bag with the event on the front of it.  Maybe you have on hand various gift cards for the purpose of thanking volunteers at different times, or maybe it is the one that goes “above and beyond”.  You can give them a small key chain that has a saying about volunteering on it.  So many different ways to show appreciation!
7. A Special Card – Send an e-card (a thank you card by email) to those that took the time to help out!  They can be ready-made, animation and sound, or create your own at some different websites that do those things.  Easy ways to show appreciation that can mean the world to a person that had dreaded giving that time!  You could turn a one-time volunteer into a regular with simple demonstrations of appreciation!
8. Parking Privilege – maybe you create a special parking space at the gym for the volunteer of the month!  That primo parking spot that every parent would DIE for opportunity to use, but the one that won the Volunteer of the Month gets!  You can present them with a certificate, maybe hang a photo and a blurb in the viewing room about who is the volunteer of the month and what they did for the organization!  Easy, and for the price of speaking to the gym owner, you are getting a HUGE show of respect!!

In discussing the small ways of saying “Thank You”, there are so many ways that you can demonstrate to your members that they truly are worth everything to you and your organization!  So many times, it is “expected” of parents to give and give to the program.  They are paying tuition, travel, hotel, food, uniform, shoes, makeup, bow, warm ups, spirit wear, practice clothing, bags, swag at competitions. . .  And then they have to give TIME?!  Or it will COST THEM?!  Not the most welcoming of atmospheres to step into and making you want to roll up your sleeves and help.  But with simple things, you can change the mind of so many.  There will still be those parents that are CPINO (Cheer Parents In Name Only), and you never see them at all save for the competition or two they have to show up at.  They drop their child off for practice, and wait in the lot when they are done and pick them up.  They do nothing for the gym, and they are not ever involved.  The only ones that know them are those that knew them before they joined the gym.  They are always a part of things, and many of them you will not see or hear from unless absolutely necessary.

Still there are so many that would LOVE to be a part of things, but they don’t want to feel like they have to be at every meeting, do every fundraising event, and sell so many things to their friends and relatives that they notice that mom and dad stopped returning their phone calls!  Things can get very intrusive when it comes to getting involved and what it can entail.  But if you work hard on keeping the promises, showing respect, and making the commitments small, you will find that more will volunteer than not.  If you have an event running for 5 hours, you need 5 people per hour, break it up into 5-one hour shifts each hour.  25 people could commit to that, and most likely would do so for that short amount of time!  It is all in the presentation!  And then when they do it, they get to know parents, have a lot of fun with their athlete(s) and raise some money in the process, they will most likely be back again to help out!

There is also the option of making it a “pledge drive”.  What?  A “pledge drive” to volunteer?  Sure!  Why not?  You could choose an orientation meeting (speak to the gym owner first), a team meeting, or parent meeting to create a pledge drive.  Ask everyone to pledge to give Just 2 Hours for the season!  If everyone promised to give Just 2 Hours, and you have 80 athletes in your gym, that is 160 hours of volunteer time!  Imagine what can get done in Just 2 Hours per person?  Create a letter explaining what the drive is, a form they can complete that pledges the Just 2 Hours, and then Celebrate when they complete it!!!!!  Recognize each person that fulfills their 2 Hours as promised!  If someone gave more hours, acknowledge them as well!!  Do this at the end of the year banquet!  Heck, create your own adult banquet where they can be recognized!  The sky is the limit on this, but something so simple and I don’t think it would be hard to get each parent to commit to Just 2 Hours during the season for a fundraiser, or volunteering to do something.  Give them all sorts of jobs for this – team parents, maybe doing admin work, typing the booster club meeting minutes for the first 3 months (then pass it on to another parent), maybe they are sending out the mass emails to all the families about booster club events, or doing some work in the gym that is much needed.  They can do just about anything to give those 2 Hours, the volunteers will be coming out of the woodwork!!  And have a recognition board in the Parent Viewing Room where those that fulfill their 2 hour commitment get their name up!  As soon as they fulfill it, put up some recognition!  See how many you can get by the end of the season!  In the end, everyone wants to be appreciated, recognized and do productive things with their time given.  You can fulfill this need simply by some planning, a bit of creativity, and a lot of vocalizing!!!  Most of all, show that it is a way to meet people in the gym, take part in their athlete(s) activity, and have a lot of fun doing it!!!! ****

9 Involvement Builders –

1. Get Social! Use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram to promote and recognize!  Advertise meetings, events, group needs, etc. so that everyone can know if and where there is a need!
2. Serve up Opportunities! Create a “menu” of opportunities!  Allow people to choose what they can do and how they would like to contribute!  List a contact officer or a chairperson for information, questions, assistance and so on.
3. Send Volunteers Home! Create opportunities for people to volunteer from their home!  They can coordinate volunteers for an upcoming event (make calls, emails, etc.), create signs, price lists, coordinate volunteers to bring something (picnics, etc.), write a newsletter or flyer, track orders for a sale, run the social media page(s), update website, or prepare items for upcoming events that need pre-planning!  The bounds are endless, and the work much appreciated!!!!!
4. Offer Prizes! Give out incentives!  They don’t have to be huge, but show that the time and participation is greatly appreciated!  Small gift cards, mugs, key chains, etc.
5. Simply Ask! Send out notices stating what is going on, what the needs are, the time that you would need committed from each person, etc.  You could create a booster club specific newsletter (get a volunteer to create it and get it out) for notifications, alerts, and so on.  Don’t just rely on meetings to get this information out to the masses – use phone, email, text, Snapchat. . .  Whatever works for you!
6. Promote Your Work! Get those photos out there of the cook out that you hosted on Saturday!  Show off the new paint job in the Parent View Room compliments of the Booster Club members that painted!  Give a huge shout out to that amazing cheer dad that with his great skill and craftsmanship was able to help repair a section of the spring floor for the athletes without the interruption of practices!!  Make sure everyone knows what you do, what has been done, and who was responsible!!!!
7. Make it a Family Affair! At times there is the reason that a volunteer can’t work is due to not being home enough with the entire family.  Well, why not bring the entire family to the event?  Kids do great promoting sales, and the littles look so cute doing it!!!!  Get everyone involved, and try to find jobs for the young kids as well.  Kids want to help, and parents want to be able to not worry about finding someone to watch their kids!  Kill two birds with one stone!
8. Take Notes! Keep a database – who did what, when did they do it, did they contribute an idea?  Make notes on all of that for the thanks to go out later!  Also the ideas generated from people as they are talking.  “You know what would have been great to do?”  People come up with the darnedest ideas when they are not trying to.  You can also keep note of volunteers and what they did so if you need that job done again, you can ask the one that already knows how to do it, and possibly have someone as a supervisor for the next event!
9. Have Fun! Does this truly have to be explained?  The more fun people have doing it, the more they will want to come and do it again!  Some events themselves are rather boring, but with the right personalities, they can be the most fun on a weekend to have!  Make the event itself fun for those that volunteer and see how well it helps your pool grow!

I hope that all of this offers some the energy to create something that truly energizes their families to take part!  If it does, feel free to shoot me an email – **pam@heartofcheer.com** – and I would LOVE to share your ideas, your successes and the things you have learned truly worked for your gym!

Keep the Drama Llamas at Bay

**By**[**Sunni Wheeler**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/author/sunni/) |  [**Blog**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/blog/), [**Cheerleaders**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/cheerleaders/), [**Coaches**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/coaches/), [**Parents**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/parents/) |  27 May 2015  | [**Add Comment**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/cheerleaders/keep-drama-llamas-bay/#respond)

****Dealing with Drama Llamas seems to come with the territory of running a cheer squad. Any time you get a bunch of leaders together you’re going to have clashing, and of course you’re coaching a bunch of cheerLEADERS!

Every year I think “This is the year that will be drama-free!” and every year I’m disappointed. It doesn’t matter if you have thirty team members or six, the Drama Monster is lurking in the shadows, waiting to pounce. Sometimes I wonder if I’m in the middle of some reality TV show. It’s not just the cheerleaders either, it’s the moms (and dads) as well!

I have come to the conclusion that we will NEVER be drama-free, but I can manage the situation when it arises. Here are a few tips I have for navigating through tricky situations.

• Try to reinforce to your team that outside problems stay outside of practice. It seems like young girls are fickle, loving each other one moment and hating each other the next. Remind them that their personal problems don’t belong in the gym.

• Come up with a list of behavioral expectation at the beginning of the year and make the team and their parents sign a “Cheer Constitution.” It should include all expectations and all consequences. This way when you have an issue, it’s clear that someone broke the agreement and it’s clear what the consequences are. This takes the emotion out of the situation.

• The physical well-being of your cheerleaders is paramount. If you feel that your cheerleaders aren’t concentrating because they are upset, then they shouldn’t be out on the floor because someone could get injured. If you have to sideline someone from practice, a game, or a competition then do it. It’s better to do that then to risk injury to one of your members.

• Try to be fair, but remember that life isn’t always fair. Remind your team of this. It is especially important in cheer competitions. The judges are humans and they make mistakes or maybe they just appreciated another squad’s routine over your own for their own reasons. Yelling at the coach, another team’s coach, the judges, or the competition staff isn’t going to change anything. It’s just going to make your team look bad. Remind your cheer parents of this! Before each competition, if necessary!

• As a coach, it’s easy to turn your attention to the areas that are making the most “noise” or “drama.” Sometimes the best course is to ignore the drama and to focus on the members of your team deserving of your attention. Drama Llamas thrive on attention. Don’t give it to them.

• If you need to take a few of your cheerleaders into a room and make them talk, then do it. Sometimes they just need to get it all out on the table. Yes, you’ll feel like a referee or a counselor, but sometimes that’s your job.

• Don’t neglect team building things throughout the year. Parties, outings, etc. are a great way to bond your team. This way, when things come unglued, it’s easier to put back together. It’s also good for the moms (and dads) to get to know one another as well.

• If the drama isn’t affecting your team directly, don’t get involved. Things usually resolve themselves quickly. When adults get involved, it tends to make the drama spread like wildfire. Kids are smart, they usually work through their issues—or forget about them! Like I said, they love each other one day, hate each other the next, and then love each other again! It’s enough to make one dizzy!

• If there seems to be one team member, or one mom (or dad), that seems to be either spreading the drama or making it worse all the time then you may need to rethink having them on your team. I can’t tell you how relieved I was when one team member chose not to be on our team the next year. I never noticed how much drama they sowed until they were gone.

• As a coach, understand that you do not have to tolerate drama on your team. It’s in everyone’s best interest that it is stopped right away. Cheerleading is supposed to be fun, and it is not fun for anyone if it is stressful. Don’t be afraid of losing the one or two Drama Llamas, you’ll lose more girls in the end if it’s not stopped!

You probably won’t have a drama-free year either, but you can keep the Drama Llamas at bay. Just make your expectations clear, run your team with a firm hand when necessary, and keep the focus on cheerleading!

Competition Survival Kit

**By**[**Claire Brundrett**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/author/claire/) |  **[Blog](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/blog/)**, [**Cheerleaders**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/cheerleaders/), [**Parents**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/category/parents/) |  19 November 2014  | [**2 Comments**](http://www.heartofcheer.com/cheerleaders/competition-survival-kit/#comments)

I have always been known as the “go to” mom. Need a bandaid, safety pin, bloomers (don’t laugh, I had a spare set that day) or snack? See me. You see, you never know what you will need in a pinch, and competition day is not the time to start finding out you left something vital, like those bloomers, at home.

I have a few small bags that I always keep in a larger bag with me. Now, I may not bring everything in, but I do keep it in the car just in case. More often than not, at some point during the day, someone will come up to me for one of the items in the bag.

I would like to share the list with you. It is separated into the bag lists, as it makes it easier to find them when I am surrounded by the chaos of the moment.

**Hair Bag**

****1. Hairspray – travel size. It need not be the high quality one you used at home, just something that will work when you have no choice.
2. Bobby pins
3. Hair ties of various sizes
4. Lip stick – ok, I do not travel with all the make-up, but I do travel with the lipstick. I find I am often reapplying it prior to warm ups.
5. Makeup remover wipes
6. BOUNCE sheet – Yup, BOUNCE. Nothing works on controlling static cling or hair like the product used to actually control static cling! As an extra bonus, it smells good and at the end of the day shove the used sheet into those nasty smelling cheer shoes!
7. Comb or brush – usually the Dollar Store has some simple travel size ones.
8. Nail Polish Remover wipes – Your coach should already be telling you that competition weekend is not the time for a mani/pedi. All the kids need to look the same, so nail polish is a no no. Wipes are for when you forgot to take that polish off your child’s nails before hitting the road.

**Medical Bag** – usually in a sandwich bag that can double as an ice bag in a pinch.

1. Band-Aids – various sizes. I like the ones with the antibiotic already on them. It keeps from having to pack an extra item.
2. Advil or Tylenol – Don’t know who uses these more, the moms or the kids.
3. Tums/ anti-diarrhea/ anti-nausea – There are now several travel varieties out there. Must have for ANY travel bag!
****4. Safety pins
5. Tide on the Go – I like the pen because it can pin point the area better, but whatever you are comfortable with will do.
6. Feminine products
7. EARPLUGS! – ‘Nuff Said.
8. Lotion – you never know when you are ashy.
9. Deodorant – hopefully no one will need it, however, someone usually will.

**Snack Bag** – I usually put all the items into the travel mug for easy packing.

1. Travel cup – check with the venue to see if they allow full ones. If not, bring an empty and fill once you are in. This saves on money and re-hydrates your athlete faster than soda.
2. Travel snacks – Ok, for the record, chocolate is not advisable as it tends to melt, however my child’s favorite item is Snickers for the energy.
3. Spare change – Be sure this is in singles and quarters. You never know what the vending machines will take.
4. Tea Bags, sugar, powder creamer – Remember that travel cup? Most places will give you hot water and you can make your own tea on those days when you are really not feeling up to par. Also could use hot cocoa, but my child is jinxed and constantly spills is on any white part of her uniform so it is not in my bag.

**Electronic Bag** – This one is usually a plastic Ziploc pinned to the inside of the Cheer Weather Bag
\*\* I may not need this at every competition, but those long weekenders are a must \*\*

1. Book/e-reader – I don’t like to bring my tablet. Most places do not offer WiFi and if you have ever been behind someone trying to use one to record the routine you know how obnoxious they are. Keep it simple. If you want to record, bring a camera with a zoom and shoot from a distance.
2. Cell phone
3. Chargers and batteries for those items you are bringing
4. Wallet – yup, wallet. If I am carrying all this stuff, I am not carrying a big purse too!
5. USASF ID – If you are a member of USASF you should print out your child’s ID card. Check the USASF website to find out how. This way if there are any questions, you have the answer on hand. It can also be used if to help others look for your child should you lose them that day.

****Now all those bags will go into my Cheer Weather Bag
1. Grocery bag – Yup – nothing else will fit over that cheer hair better on a rainy day, not even that umbrella.
2. Blanket or Snuggie – I started packing this when I realized one popular venue automatically shuts off its heat at 5:00 sharp. By 6:30, you and your child are ice pops. If I know it is a really late night schedule, I may even shove in a travel pillow.
3. Socks – Nothing feels worse than wet socks = and cheer socks don’t need to be in the rain to get wet. All those lights are HOT and those kids’ feet sweat!

Remember, this is MY bag. My daughter has her own where she puts her warm ups and boots (if cold weather) and her other articles. I find she brings in less stuff when she has to carry her own, and seldom misses any of it.

Your bag may not be as extensive as mine. Moms of smaller children will need to include a change of clothes or teddy bear, or whatever you feel necessary.

Being prepared will put not only your mind at ease, but your child as well. Knowing that you can handle anything thrown your way will allow you and your child to adapt quickly and face the competition head on. Now for the final thing to bring. The one thing that does not fit in my bag of tricks – a smile and a loud voice. Now go cheer your kids on today.