

The Cardinals Board of Directors has received many questions from our friends and family regarding our cheer program. We have compiled a list of questions received thus far and hope to correct any confusion and clarify information.

We heard that the Cardinals are returning to Pop Warner. Is this true?

- No. The Cardinals proudly remain a part of American Youth Football and Cheer.

We heard that there is another cheer program in town. Will the Cardinals compete against them?

- Another cheer program has been established in Merrimack. We are a part of American Youth Cheer (AYC) and they are a part of Pop Warner. As there are only a couple of other Pop Warner cheer teams in New Hampshire, we anticipate that they will compete in Massachusetts. We have been advised by Tammy Gagne, AYC Cheer Commissioner, that the Hawks' request to participate in the Tri Cup competitions was declined. This means that the Cardinals and the Hawks will not compete against one another in any of our scheduled competitions.

We were told that the Cardinals do not have cheer coaches and that the coaches they do have lack experience, causing an unsafe environment.

- Safety is our top priority. Our Cheer Coordinator, Michelle Lambert, has been cheering since middle school and has been coaching since the age of 16. Jennifer Switter has been cheering and coaching for over 20 years. Stephanie Sylvester has been cheering, coaching and choreographing for over a decade. We frequently onboard new assistant coaches, however, all coaches must complete mandatory training regarding program information, skill knowledge and safety criteria, regardless of their past experience.

We were told that the Cardinals would "push" a child into a higher level, even if they don't have the requisite skills.

- We have been made aware that this was a concern in cheer over previous seasons. Please be assured that the Cardinals will place your athlete at the appropriate level for his/her age and level of skill. We will also work with each athlete to develop skills throughout the season.

We were told that the other cheer program would encroach on our gym time at the Merrimack Schools.

- The School Board has advised us that Merrimack Youth Association programs will receive priority when scheduling gym time. We wish there were more time slots available to cover the many MYA programs each season and we do not anticipate that there will be additional slots made available to non-MYA programs. Even still, if slots are available, it will not reduce the time available to the Cardinals.

We heard that the other cheer program doesn't have to cheer at football games.

- This may be the case temporarily, as there are no other Pop Warner football teams in New Hampshire and very few Pop Warner cheer teams but we do not imagine it will be allowed for long. Pop Warner, like AYF, requires that a cheer squad cheer for a football team. As previous members of Pop Warner, we know that when a situation like this was presented in the past, they might consider a temporary approval contingent upon that cheer squad locating a football team for which to cheer. Otherwise, they would not be permitted to remain in Pop Warner. If they hope to join the middle school or high school teams, they will cheer at games as they progress in the sport, so it is helpful for them to have this experience. With that said, our Cardinals cheerleaders proudly cheer at football games. We are lucky to be a part of a strong, supportive community and are happy to show it on 8 Sundays in the fall by cheering-on our teams! This is a great way to gather with our community and have some fun!

The new program has been advertising for months. Why are you just starting?

- The Cardinals are bound by date limitations in advertising, fundraising and registration for our programs. We were not permitted to do so prior.

The new cheer program emailed me...did they use my information that they obtained when they were still with the Cardinals?

- It would be a violation of several rules and guidelines if this were to have happened. If you receive a communication that you did not request and fear that your information was taken without your permission, please contact Dan Tevepaugh, Merrimack Cardinals President, immediately.