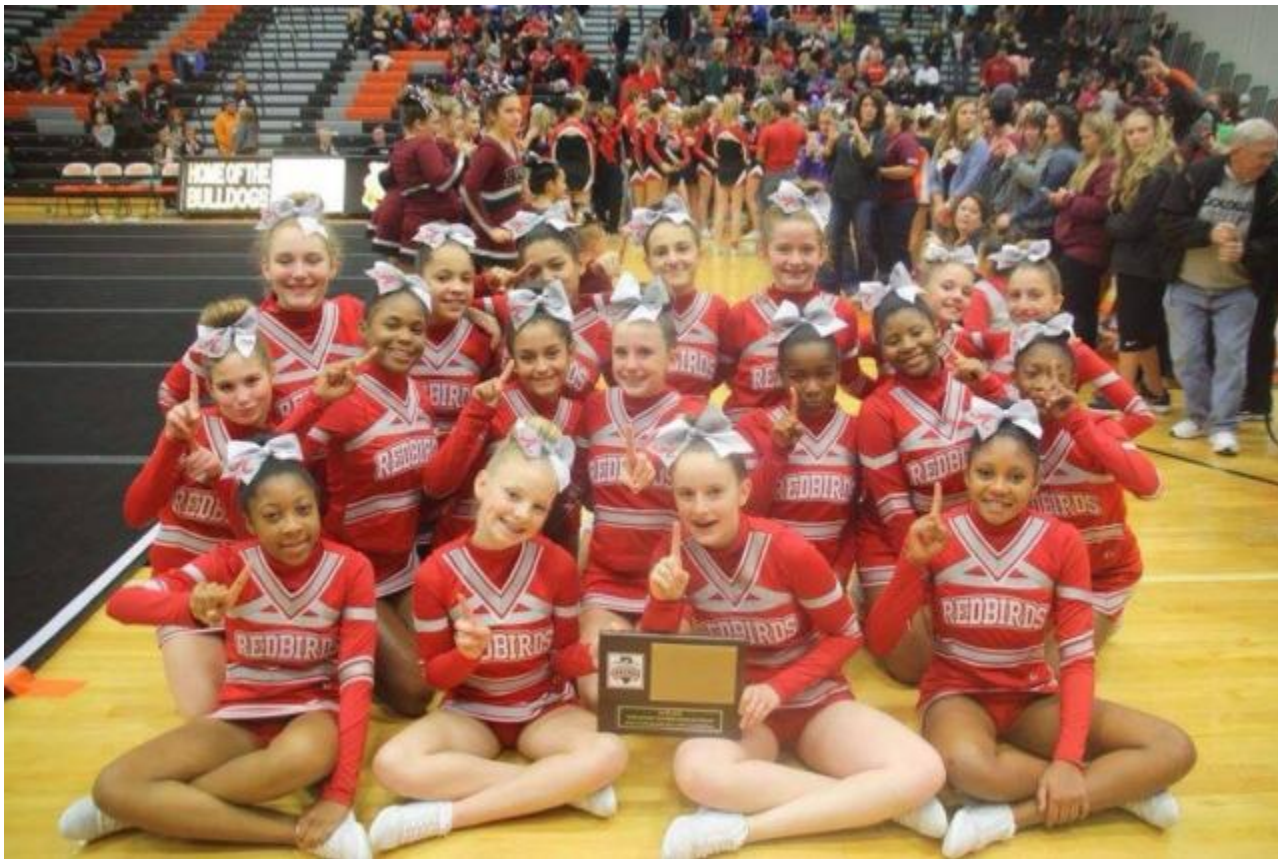


# Alton High hosts first large scale cheerleading competition, local teams have success

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
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**ALTON** - For the first time in history, **Alton** hosted its first major **cheerleading competition** in the high school gymnasium, Nov. 29, and after considerable organization and work, it was smooth sailing.

**Alton Middle School** coaches **Felicia Alexander** and **Casey Hansen** spent much of last year and even the year before preparing for this big day. Regulation mats are a necessity to host a competition and the two, along with the cheerleaders, worked dynamically to raise the funds to purchase the mats in agreement that the school district would match the funds raised.

"It is a big deal to host a competition this size," said Hansen. "It is a lot of work but so much fun."

Eleven other schools competed in the all-day competition to include Granite City, Jacksonville, Belleville East, Southwestern, Bunker Hill, Greenville, Jerseyville, Mt.

Olive, East Alton Wood River and Emge Junior High School all competed in the competition.

Several affiliated with the **Alton High and Alton Middle School cheerleaders** volunteered time to coordinate the event and those in attendance seemed well pleased, Alton High School cheerleading coach **Asaki Carr** said.

After a two-day basketball competition at Alton High School, the AMS cheerleaders, parents and coaches spent much of Saturday night cleaning and setting up for the competition. Sunday morning came quick for the girls as the dedicated team showed up bright and early to put in the much needed leg work to prepare for the hundreds of cheerleaders, families and friends that would be showing up in just a few hours.

“We knew it would be a lot of work to host but it was all worth it,” said Alexander.

“We had really a solid turnout and many showed up to watch,” Carr said. “For the most part, we had no major hiccups.”

After all the organization, preparedness and coordination, the girls locked in to their spirit and gave it their all out on the mats.

“The girls did a great job, we are very proud of them,” said Hanser. “They work so hard and it really shows.”

Alton High School’s varsity placed third in the meet, while Alton Middle School placed first in two different categories. A co-ed Alton group also placed first and qualified for the Illinois Coaches and Cheerleading Association Meet on Jan. 9 and 10. Carr said she was exceptionally pleased with how both the high school and middle school group performed.

Teams were judged in a variety of areas from voice, pyramid stunts, dance, overall effectiveness of transitions and synchronization, jumps, tumbling, transitions and more.

The Alton coaches and athletes were excited to see the large crowd supporting them and their sport.

“It has always been a struggle to get recognition for competitive cheerleading,” Carr said. “It is a whole different story when you see what the girls do outside of cheering at games. We had big support and I think it put cheerleading from a different perspective. It was major for exposing our sport to the Alton area.”



It took Alton's cheerleading group considerable time to come up with enough mats to hold such a competition and the girls raised the funds through fund-raising tactics.

"We used nine mats from the middle school for the competition and the seven mats we have at the high school for practice space in the Commons area," Carr said. "The girls go through a practice run before they compete."

Granite City and Belleville West placed first and second in the high school team competition, respectively.

The next step for Alton's high school and varsity cheerleading teams is the Illinois Coaches and Cheerleading Association Meet in January, so the team will be preparing in coming days, in addition to the regularly scheduled cheering at games.





[Brittany Kohler also contributed to this story.](#)