

Cheerleaders Find Unconventional Ways to Spread Cheer

by Cathie Hentrich

December 25 2020 5:45 AM



EDWARDSVILLE - Current restrictions due to the pandemic are keeping school sports from practicing and competing, but that doesn't stop Edwardsville's Lincoln Middle School Cheerleaders from staying busy.

"While we are excited to compete and defend our Illinois Cheerleading State Champion title, that can't happen at the moment," said Kelly Ruehl who coaches the team with Kaci Twichell. "Instead of focusing on preparing for competitions, we are committed to concentrating on the things that we CAN do as a team." The team decided early on that instead of being down about what they couldn't do this season that they would agree to spread cheer throughout their community in any way possible.

So, in addition to doing virtual physical training to stay in shape, the cheerleaders began looking for other ways to "cheer-up" those around them. They made cards for a local assisted living facility and are planning a food drive for the local food pantry right after the holiday season. The students also put on a socially-distanced parade.

One of the most heartwarming acts the kids achieved was performing a private performance for a local little girl who was recently diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. The girls made cards and gifts and even invited this little one to perform with them once the Covid restrictions for athletes have lifted. This performance was probably one of the most touching of their young athlete careers.

"We have a group of wonderful, hard-working, generous athletes and these activities are good for us all. These types of events build leadership skills and character while helping us bond as a team. It also shows the kids that they have the ability to make a difference in their community." said Ruehl.

