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Cheerleader camp at Campolindo sets foundation for the future

By Jon Kingdon



Photo Selin Wold

With so many young women competing in sports, it was only natural for there to be summer sports camps for them to attend.

Still, there are also camps for the "non-traditional" sport of cheerleading like the one at Campolindo though at one point, due to the pandemic, the numbers of high school cheerleaders were precipitously down.

"At one point at Campolindo, there was only a total of six cheerleaders comprised of two sophomores and four freshmen on the varsity," said Selin Wold, one of the heads of the Campolindo camp. "During COVID, we had 12 on the team and then last year, our numbers were up to 26."

This camp began about 10 years ago and Wold, who at one point was a cheerleader at Campolindo and has been the team's head cheerleader coach the past four years, and Brenda Luster who will also be coaching the cheerleaders this year, took over the camp two years ago. "We have girls on our high school cheer team that went to this camp when they were little," Wold said.

Cheerleading like any other sport is not immune from injuries and doing things safely was a primal concern at the camp. "You can definitely have injuries, but we train very carefully in stages to be well prepared to move on to more difficult stunts," Luster said.

"We worked on a lot of safety drills to start with before moving on to do more complicated things," Wold said. "I also learned that the first thing head football coach Kevin Macy teaches his football team is how to fall in a way to avoid getting hurt and we teach that to our team, particularly the flyer, the one who's on top to make sure that if they fall, their arms are not flailing which is how they can get hurt."

With the Campolindo varsity cheerleaders at their own camp in Santa Clara with 20 other schools, there were 124 4-year-olds to eighth-graders at the camp coached by the younger cheerleaders at Campolindo. "We like to have our cheerleaders run the camp," Wold said. "We break them up into groups by different grades and ages which empowers them. They learn leadership skills, and they love doing it, so it works out really well."

Brena Favro, an incoming sophomore, was a cheerleader last year and was one of the coaches at the camp. "Growing up, I did not go to a camp like this, but I really wish I had because it is so much fun for the kids," Favro said. "It was an amazing experience working with these kids that will soon be cheerleaders. I taught all the levels and bonding with the kids was amazing. It's a great feeling to have little kids look up to us. They've improved so much, and they go home, and they practice their cheers and that's important."

For a long time, most did not experience cheer until they got to high school, but they are starting much younger now. The Campolindo camp ranged from kindergartners up to eighth grade. The first group was comprised of kindergartners and first-graders, the second group the third- and fourth-graders and the senior group of fifth- through eighth-graders.

"The youngest group worked on simple moves and then dancing with a lot of repeat moves," Wold said. The middle group worked on beginning stunts, more advanced moves in the dance and the older group were trained on tumbling, stunts and dances.

At the end of the session, each of the groups then returned and performed at the halftime of the final session of Coach Macy's summer camp scrimmage much to the delight of family and friends.

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