

# WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS

Teamwork doesn't stop on the floor!

BY JEN JONES

From fundraising to chaperoning, being on board with an active team is almost a full-time job! But when you already have a job and a family, the demands of helping out can sometimes seem overwhelming. The great news is that by teaming up with other squad parents, you can all contribute to the cause and even have a good time doing it! Read on for the full 411 on how to do it all.

## Open the lines of communication.

"Communication is key," says Carmela Licastro, head cheer coach at Long Valley MS and West Morris Central HS in Long Valley, NJ. "The parents are phenomenal. I can call them up with any request and they will help out with anything. If it wasn't for the parents, I couldn't do this."

For Coach Licastro's squads, competitive traveling, mandatory fundraisers, games and lots of practice time means faithful cooperation from the parents. To help her busy cheer parents communicate with one another, Coach Licastro introduced a squad website that she says has been a "godsend." On the site, parents can e-mail one another to arrange transportation or decide who will attend upcoming competitions. Message boards can serve as a gold mine of information as the main hub for announcements, practice times and game schedules.

Creating a website doesn't have to be expensive or time-consuming. There are dozens of companies that provide free hosting and stress-free site creation. Among them are [www.tripod.com](http://www.tripod.com), [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com) and [www.angelfire.lycos.com](http://www.angelfire.lycos.com).

Nominate a computer-savvy parent to take on the challenge of creating and maintaining the website. The appointed webmaster can then work with the coach to keep the site current on squad info and activities.

For those who are technically challenged, no need to worry. There are plenty of ways to stay in the loop! Parents can take part in phone trees that trickle down from the coach. Each parent is assigned one or two people to call, who then pass the word on to the people underneath them. The phone tree is especially useful for last-minute announcements and schedule changes.

## Consider everyone's strengths.

Since it's often mandatory or strongly suggested that parents partake in fundraising efforts, why not make it mutually beneficial? Take stock of what each squad parent does for a living and evaluate whether a fundraiser can be done through a parent's local business.

For instance, if a team member's parent owns a local grocery store, why not have the team bag groceries for a day to raise money? The store gets free advertising and more foot traffic while the squad earns much-needed funds. Ditto for the parents who own a gas station (car wash) or print shop (spirit T-shirts).

The Rochester (MN) Junior All-Stars have experienced fundraising success thanks to the contributions of team parents, says Head Coach Sara

Hames. Recent fundraisers including a high-profile golf tournament have raised a great deal of money for the squad. "We couldn't have done it without our parents," says Coach Hames.

If you don't feel inclined to head up fundraising, there are many other ways you can contribute. Coach Hames also enlists the aid of team parents when ordering uniforms, warm-ups, poms and other gear.

## Mix squad business with pleasure.

Working together with squad parents doesn't have to be all work and no play. Coach Licastro says that her adults bond just as much as the members. While the kids indulge in sleepovers and trips to the movies, the parents have parties and travel together to competitions all over the country.

Nancy Newton, whose 14-year-old daughter Carly is on the Rochester Junior All-Stars, says that both she and Carly have made a lot of new friends through the squad. A former cheerleader herself, Nancy was "thrilled" when Carly made the squad and eagerly accepted the role of squad parent despite her busy schedule. Though it may seem like a lot of obligations to take on, being a squad parent is ultimately a rewarding experience.



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