

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2019



Columbia pompom team builds confidence

by Tony Buhr | Feb. 26, 2019, 4:05 p.m.

Education



World photo/Don Seabrook

Donna Young teaches her pompom team how to march.



WENATCHEE— A group of elementary school girls stand in lines, raise their arms and cheer, “Go Cougars! Go Cougars!”

Columbia Elementary School Pompom Team members last week received their socks, shirts and hair ribbons, as well as the pompoms and skirts they borrow. The girls wiggled with excitement when their coach, Donna Young, pulled a pair of pompoms out of a bag and showed them to the whole team.

This year’s pompom team has 27 girls, Young said. She has led the team for over 10 years. It consists of fourth- and fifth-graders, and girls can participate for two years. The girls learn a set of cheers and perform them during school assemblies, a mariachi event and the Apple Blossom Festival youth parade.

The girls need more events at which to perform, she said.

“It started because a fourth- and a fifth-grade girl went to the principal at the time and asked if we could have cheerleaders,” Young said. “Well, we are an elementary school and we don’t have anything to cheer for, except ourselves.”





MORE INFO

How to help

People with an event for the Columbia Elementary School Pompom Team to perform at can contact coach Donna Young at 662-7526.

But Young agreed to create a pompom team, she said. A pompom team isn't a cheer or drill squad, but it does give the girls an opportunity to learn teamwork and to support each other

"It is learning to work in a group, learning to care about others," Young said. "And we talk about this every day at the end. We support each other, we help each other."

In its first years, the girls wore denim shorts and they paid for their shirts and socks, she said.

"And I either made or bought ribbon and made hair bows for them," Young said. "Because I wanted them to feel like they were part of a team."

But Pioneer Middle School found old cheer skirts, Spanx and pompoms and donated them for the elementary school to use, she said. A couple years ago, Jeff Martin with Superior Fruit Equipment agreed to sponsor the pompom team and pays for the shirts, socks and hair ribbons. The girl's favorite part though is probably the Spanx they have to wear.

"This cracks the girls up because cheerleaders have to wear little Spanx in case the wind blows, and they all think that is a really big deal," Young said. "It is really funny."

Kimberlee N. Brown, 10, said she really enjoys participating in the pompom team. It is teaching her confidence, teamwork and not to be shy.

"I like how it boosts our confidence, and when we're shy it makes us more louder," Brown said.

Isabel M. Mendez, 10, said she's been doing pompom team for two years. She likes the friends she has made on the team and learning how to interact with younger girls.

"The fifth-grade girls are going to leave next year and then we have some fourth-graders," Mendez said. "And we get to get close to the fourth graders, which helps us be nice with them and work together."

Both girls are going to middle school next year and are nervous about the experience. But pompom is helping boost their confidence and get ready for that next big step.

"We have to have more classes and no breaks, beside lunch," Mendez said. "That's crazy! I don't want to go to it. I'd rather stay here and do pompom. But I can't with middle school."

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