



CHEERLEADING

Frequently Asked Questions

General

What is the UM Gator Athletic Program? The UM GATORS is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization founded in 2008. Our goal is to have a professional and ELITE organization for competitive youth sports. We are proud members of the Metropolitan Washington American Youth Football League (Metro AYF), which is a division of the American Youth Football (AYF) National Program.

Is there a cheer program? The American Youth Football (AYF) League created a sister league uniquely for its' Cheerleaders. This league is called American Youth Cheer (AYC). AYF strongly encourages cheerleading for all teams. It also encourages competition between squads for league (local), regional and national championships.

The UM Gators Cheerleaders will have a **Tournament Membership Structure**, meaning, we plan to participate in AYF/AYC Regional and National Championships and other pre or post-season **competitions**. These leagues are required to strictly abide by AYC Rules and Regulations and age divisions as outlined in the *Official American Youth Cheerleading Rulebook*.

AYC governing principles are:

1. Safety
2. Sportsmanship
3. Full Participation

For more information on the AYC and how it is structured, please visit <http://www.americanyouthfootball.com/cheerleading.asp>

Registration

When does registration start? Registration starts on March 1st of each year, and the registration enrollment period ends on September 1st of each year.

How late can I sign up? The earlier you sign up, the better we can secure your cheer uniform; once the uniforms have been ordered, we will not accept additional girls. The cheer orientation meeting will be held tentatively in May. The Uniform sizing day will be held tentatively in June and the orders will be placed tentatively at the end of June, since it will take 4-6 weeks for them to return. The UM GATORS Athletic Program reserves the right to close registration at any time with no advance notice.

Are there any discounts? Yes, we provide very lucrative discount packages for all of our players. Regardless of when you sign up, there will always be multiple discounts for siblings and multiple program participation discounts.

Are there any payment plans? We don't have any payment plans available on the 2011 on-line registration system. However, please contact Brian Hawkins, President (Coach Hawk) if a payment plan is needed. Payment plans are only authorized by Coach Hawk on a case by case basis. If you are selected for a payment plan, all payments must be paid in full by June, as that is when all uniform orders will be placed. No orders will be placed unless all fees are paid in full. **No Exception.**

When do I turn in my Medical Release form? With our new 2011 on-line registration system, once you register, all required forms are automatically filled out in the background for you. We/You can print these forms at any time. The Medical Release form must be printed, signed, and turned in to the organization before you are allowed to participate. You can bring the form with you on the first day of practice July 25, 2011.

I have a medical condition or disability. Can I still cheer? More than likely you can still cheer. If your doctor is willing to sign your medical release and you are willing to work hard, you can generally have a good cheerleading experience. However, we would recommend contacting our Cheer Director (Mrs. Denise) or Cheer Coach (Coach Deyon) to discuss your specific details and any concerns you might have.

Does my Medical Release form need to be signed by a doctor? Either a doctor or a registered nurse must sign and date the form.

Do I need a physical? A doctor's examination or physical are acceptable if that is what your doctor or registered nurse requires to confidently sign your Medical Release form. It must be dated in the current calendar year.

Do I have to participate in a Fundraiser? No, your fundraiser commitment is part of your registration fee.

Do I have to work concessions a certain number of games? No; another positive change in 2011 for our parents. The UM GATORS home games will be catered by food vendors; we want you to enjoy the day by watching your kids play football and cheer. The UM GATORS staff will be responsible for concessions, if needed.

Why does it cost so much? The UM GATORS organization is growing and expanding every year to bring you more options and an improved practice, game day and family experience while still maintaining the same high quality standard for excellence that we hope initially led you to join us to begin with. The reality is that there are substantial costs involved with running a growing elite organization. However, the UM GATORS are committed to working with families that support and share our vision for providing an elite youth sports and mentoring program, but have financial challenges.

If there are personal circumstances that lead you to look around for a better bargain, we understand, we know there is competition for your dollars in this area. However, we encourage you to look closely as you "comparison shop" with other area youth sports groups. We also encourage you to ask the right questions. Although, advertised registration costs, fees and such may be lower in another program, be sure that you understand what those fees include; quite often, the lower the fee the more you will be responsible for once the season has started. We encourage you to evaluate the **quality of the program...quality of the uniforms...quality of the field...quality of instruction...quality of the players/parents...quality of the staff...safety of the practice/game areas...quality of the league...type of team/organization insurance coverage....history of success and commitment to local youth.**

We hope and expect that you will recognize the clear difference between joining another local youth group and investing in the "The Program". It's not bragging or arrogance, but demonstrated facts. We think of ourselves as a family and a family-oriented program. The UM GATORS coaches, staff, volunteers, and parents make an investment in your son/daughter and we ask that you invest in us as we grow and develop into the pride of P.G. County and the surrounding area. We reward the loyalty of those who invest in us, support us, and believe in our vision for providing quality athletic programs targeting our underserved communities.

Please take a look at the chart below and it will show that your registration fee falls short of what it cost to operate this program.

UM GATORS Admin/Operation Fees		Association Office/League Expenses		Cheer Expenses	
Background checks	\$1.25	Association fee: Metro AYF/AYC	\$2.00	Cheer Uniform Package: Uniform rental (Shell, Skirt, Poms), Briefs, Half Top, Bow, Socks, Shoes, practice gear, and Cheer Bag	\$200.00
Staff and Director Insurance	\$7.25	Team registrations: Metro AYF/AYC	\$7.00		
Club/Ceremony Rentals	\$4.00	Team registrations: AYF/AYC	\$3.00		
Training/registration fees	\$7.50	Cheerleader Insurance	\$12.25		
First Aid Kits	\$1.50	Website maintenance fee	\$3.75		
Field Paint	\$10.00	Board Meetings	\$2.50		
Ice/Water	\$5.00	Copies/print cartridges	\$1.85		
Fuel/Maint.- GATOR Trailer	\$1.55	Postages	\$0.85		
Field Prep. & Maintenance	\$6.25	Paper supplies	\$1.85		
Red Cross Training/CPR	\$1.00	Club/Ceremony Rentals	\$5.00		
Fundraiser fee	\$50.00	Snack fee/Home game meals	\$30.00		
Total	\$95.30	Total	\$70.05	Total	\$200.00

Total cost per Cheerleader:	\$365.35	<i>Premium trophy, awards banquet and camp costs are mostly absorbed by the UM GATORS organization.</i>
Registration fee per player:	\$300.00	<i>Our registration fee is very comparable or cheaper than other major youth programs.</i>
Organization <u>overage deficit</u> cost per player:	\$65.35	<i>Even with your fundraiser fee added into the registration cost. This is our shortfall that we try to make up thru donations from you or sponsorships from our local businesses.</i>

Additional Fees

Cheerleading, although fun, can be a very expensive sport. We are striving to have the best girls in the area, making them competitive enough to move on as an All-Star cheerleader, be it with our organization or with their school. In order to do this, a commitment must be made by the parents to have the girls at the required practices and to pay the cost associated with renting the gym facilities and hiring the proper staff. The additional fees listed are estimates and are provided so that you know what to expect prior to the season. The gym practices are mandatory for every girl, as this time will be used to teach proper cheer techniques along with this year's choreographer for our cheer routine, in a safe environment.

Acknowledgement and a commitment to pay the additional fees, by way of a deposit, will be required prior to us ordering uniforms. The final payment will be required prior to the first gym practice.

Cheer Camp (Includes certified staff)	TBD
Gym Fee (Includes gym use and qualified staffing)	TBD
AYC Competition Fees (local, regional & national)	TBD
Cheer Warm-up Suit	TBD
TOTAL	TBD

Although the \$50 fundraising fee is included with the registration fee, those who wish to participate in additional fundraising events to help defray the cost of the various fees and traveling cost, contact Denise@umgators.com. The additional money raised will be applied to your account or refunded back to you if fees have been paid in full.

Cheerleading Specifics

How many divisions are there? This will depend on the number of girls that sign up. The divisions are broken down by age and skill level (for competitions only) and are as follows:

<u>Division</u>	<u>Ages</u>	<u>Color</u>
Tiny/Mitey Mite	5,6,7,8	*RED ONLY - plus mascots
Division 10	8,9,10	*RED ONLY
Division 12	11,12,13	*Red and Blue
Division 13	11,12,13	*Red and Blue
Division 15	13,14,15	*Red and Blue
Division 18	15,16,17,18 *competition only	*BLUE ONLY
Challenger Division	Mixed Ages – *Skillset based	*RED ONLY
*AGE CUT OFF/BIRTHDAY DATE: July 31st		

What is the time commitment? We will kick off our cheer program with a meet and greet, date to be determined (check www.umgators.com for latest info). This will provide a setting for our girls to become reacquainted, welcome the new girls, and/or provide answers to the parents of those girls who may be interested in cheering. We will discuss in detail the upcoming season and what is to be expected in regards to the time commitment, practice and game schedules, mentoring sessions, gym practice, cheer camp, competitions, and those additional costs that's not included in the registration fees. A separate meeting will follow, at which time we will take the uniform sizes of those girls that have registered and place the order.

We encourage parents to register early because in order to be ready for our first game, tentatively scheduled for the end of August, we must condition, practice, and order uniforms.

Who can participate? Any girl, ages 5 – 15, can participate.

Are all kids able to cheer? Every registered child will be allowed to cheer at each game.

What if I'm outside of Prince Georges County area? We have no boundaries in the Metro AYF/AYC.

Are parents allowed to coach or volunteer? We welcome all parents to get involved in the program; rather it's coaching or volunteering. All parents and coaches are required to undergo a background check before participation can begin.

Do we buy a uniform? The registration fees will cover the cost of the cheerleader's uniform package. See above chart. However, the parents are *responsible for purchasing the mandatory warm-up suit. Warm-ups will be ordered at the same time as the cheer uniforms, so all monies will be due at the same time as the "uniform sizing day". If you were a cheerleader last year, 2010, we will use the same warm-up suit, so no need to reorder.*

What is the "Uniform Sizing Day"? The uniform Sizing Day is when all cheerleaders will be measured and sized for their uniform. A responsible parent will be required to sign and approve the size being ordered, as there will be no refunds or exchanges once the order is placed. The exact day and time will be announced, but in order to plan for the additional warm-up suit fee, mark your calendar for the month of June.

Who are Sideline Cheerleaders? The sideline cheerleaders are those girls who don't wish to compete, but rather cheer only at the games. Sideline cheerleaders will still be required to attend the cheer camp and the gym practices.

Who are the Competitive Cheerleaders? The competitive cheerleaders are those girls that have the desire to compete in all of the AYC local and regional competitions, and if they are advanced to the next level, the national competition, which are held in Orlando, Florida. ***You must be willing and committed to traveling to the regional or national championship, prior to joining the competitive squad.***

So does this mean I will have to travel? Yes. If you are on the competitive squad you must commit to traveling to the various competitions. The UM Gators organizations' goal is to take our football players and cheerleaders to Orlando, Florida to compete for the National Championship. The football and cheerleading National Championships are both held during the first week in December. The championship week begins on Saturday with football and normally runs through and finishing up with cheerleading competitions by the following Sunday. More details will be available as the season begins, but the first week of December is a standard week for the National Championship in Orlando, Florida, so plan your vacation accordingly.

Are travel cost covered by the UM Gators organization? No, each parent will be responsible for the cost to travel to the various events, games, competitions, and eventually to Orlando, Florida; which is why we have started the UM Gators travel fund. You can visit the website for more information, http://www.umgators.com/travel/travel_fund.html, but the fund is basically to help defray the cost to parents for our players and cheerleaders to travel to our out of state games, regional, and eventually the National Championship, held in Orlando, Florida.

What is the All-star squad? Since other local competitive cheer seasons begin after football season, we will create a squad for those girls who wish to continue to compete in local competitions that are held after the AYC National Championship in December. Additional costs, such as competition fees, may be required. More information will be provided at a later date.

If the cheerleaders don't advance to the regional level or national level, will they still travel with the football teams? Yes. We would like to have a cheer squad at all of our events to include games that are played out of state.

What are the competition rules? In general, we will use the rules established by Metro AYF and the AYC National Association, in addition to the rules for various outside competitions.

Can I be a sideline and competitive cheerleader? Yes, all competitive cheerleaders will also cheer on the sideline during the football season.

What are cheerleading tumbling classes? Tumbling classes are geared to teach the cheerleaders the proper beginner's techniques such as round-offs, standing back handsprings, and jumps up to more advanced techniques such as layouts, full twists, double fulls and whip backs. The monthly cost will be included with the gym fee, which is pending, but we are working to make it feasible for everyone.

Is there additional cost to the registration fees if I am a competitive cheerleader? Yes, competitive cheerleaders will be responsible for paying the additional fees to cover the cost of gym time, choreography and music for the routine, competition fees, and any additional uniform gear that is required for the competitions.

Will I have to try out to become a competitive cheerleader? Yes, try-outs will be held for those interested in becoming a competitive cheerleader. However, try-outs will not be rigorous or critical, it is just an assessment to determine whether the girls can execute the basic tumbling moves and/or cheer techniques. Try-outs will be held after the summer cheer camp. This will allow the girls to be exposed to the proper techniques before they decide whether they really want to compete or whether they are more comfortable with being a sideline cheerleader.

Can the girls paint their faces with logos and wear sparkle body lotions and makeup? The cheerleaders are allowed to paint their faces and/or wear logos in support of the team, as long as the cheer coaches and parents have approved it.

Will make-up be required? Competitive cheerleaders will be required to wear suitable make-up, such as eye shadow and lip gloss to the competitions. The make-up that matches the uniforms will be provided.

My daughter wants to be on the same team with all her friends. Is that possible? You may make a request at the time of registration, and your request will be noted on the form by staff. WE DO NOT GUARANTEE ANY REQUESTS. The UM Gators will

make every effort to put friends together if they are able to be in the same division, but ages of divisions overlap slightly and in order to have the numbers necessary for each squad, we may not be able to accommodate everyone.

Can my daughter cheer for my son's team? You may make this request at the time of registration. We make every effort to pair siblings if they qualify to be in the same division. However, the divisions of the cheer squad are determined solely by age and skill level.

Can both my daughters be on the same team? You may make this request at the time of registration. We make every effort to pair sibling if they qualify to be in the same division.

How are different squads grouped? Cheerleaders are assigned by their age to a division.

How many girls are assigned to each division? At least 5 girls are required in order to create or compete in AYC, therefore, the age and the number of girls that we have, will determine the maximum number of girls in each division.

Can I request a specific coach? No.

Can I request friends I want to be on a team with? If your friend is in the same division and squad type (sideline or competitive), your request will be considered, otherwise, no.

I participated in try-outs, how or when do I find out whether I made the squad? You will be informed once your age and skill level has been assembled and verified.

How are coaches chosen? Applicants for the coaching positions are required to go thru an extensive interview process conducted by the UM GATORS Executive Board. Once selected, the head coach will be allowed to select his/her coaching staff (usually from the parents that are volunteering on that particular team) with the final approval coming from the Executive Board. All coaches are required to have a background check.

Practices

Where are the practices held? All practices will be held at the Brandywine Lions Club, Cheltenham, MD. Once a gym has been confirmed for our tumbling class, we will substitute a practice day at the field with a practice at the gym.

When do practices start? The first day of practice will be July 25, 2011.

How long are practices? Most practices are 2 hours long. Practice times will be 5:45 to 7:45. The whole organization practices on the same days of the week.

How many practices are there per week? Between July 25 and the start of school, the cheerleaders will practice 5 days a week. After the start of school, practices will be reduced to 3 days a week; Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. Again, one of these days or another day of the week will be used as a gym day for tumbling classes. Regardless of which day, practices will only be conducted 3 days a week during school. Game day is not considered practice time.

Why are practices so late? There are two reasons for this. First, most of our coaches and volunteers have regular jobs as well as the parents, and it is very difficult to start practice before 5:30 PM. Every effort is made to make sure the kids are released at 7:45 PM.

Is it a problem if my child misses some practices and/or some games? Yes. Cheerleading is a difficult sport and a team effort. Participants will learn routines, lifts and stunts. When a participant does not show up for practices this could affect the entire workout. Participants that miss practice may not know how to perform the routines or stunts that are being taught which endangers the participant and the teammates. Participants on a competition squad may be removed from stunt sequences for safety reasons, as we will not compromise the safety of any of our participants. All participants need to make every effort to be available for each practice session throughout the season.

If I missed practice because of school work, will my child still cheer? Yes, your child will still cheer for the game. However she may have a limited role that week. As stated earlier, cheerleaders will learn routines, lifts and stunts. When a cheerleader does not show up for practices this could affect the entire workout. Cheerleaders that miss practice may not know how to perform the routines or stunts that are being taught which endangers the cheerleader and their teammates. It is highly recommended that the girls attend all of the practices and take advantage of the Gators Academic Tent (G.A.T.), which is discussed below under the Parents Council Board (PCB) section.

My child really wants to cheer, but she participates in other activities that may interfere with some practices, will that be a problem? Not a problem, but if your child desires to be on the competitive squad, a commitment must be made to the squad. Contact the head coach or cheer director as soon as possible to discuss your child's schedule so that they can determine whether the conflict can be resolved.

What is a weekly/monthly conflict form? This form is used to determine the number of schedule conflicts that our competitive squad may have in order to make the practices more convenient, for the majority, if possible. However, if a resolution is not available, placement on a competitive team may be affected.

What about the vacation I have scheduled? Go and enjoy yourself, but please tell your coach as soon as you can. We hope that with the information being posted in advance, you will have flexibility in scheduling your vacation around the football and cheer season.

What is cheer mentoring? The UM Gators are proud to offer mentoring sessions once a week during practice for our cheerleaders. We take pride in not being the ordinary cheerleading squad. Our goal is to provide information to our girls that will build their character and self esteem. Days and times will be determined once the squads have been put in place. Every cheerleader will be required to attend the mentoring sessions as they are used to create, not just a squad, but a family.

Games

How long are the games? Games are made up of four 8 and 10 minute quarters; most games last for 1 hour for the Tiny Mites and Mitey Mites and 1 ½ hours for the Cadet division and above. In addition, cheerleaders are expected to be at the field at least 1 hour before the game to warm up. So count on spending up to 2 to 3 hours on game day.

Why do I have to get to the game so early? This ensures that there is adequate time to warm up and decrease your chance for injuries. If you are "time challenged", consider carpooling or setting your alarm 30 to 60 minutes earlier than usual. You don't want your child to get hurt, and you don't want to miss a game!

How many games are they required to cheer? Unless the cheerleader is sick or have a previous engagement that was discussed with the coach, they will be expected to cheer at every season and post season game, along with the local, regional, and national championship game. The teams can play between 8 to 12 games, we ask that every parent understand that we are a National organization, and the further the football team advance in the playoffs, we will be required to travel with that team to cheer them on.

Where are games played? Our home games are played at the Brandywine Lion Clubs, in Cheltenham, MD. Most of our away games are played against other associations in Saint Mary's County, Prince Georges County, and Montgomery County. In addition, there will be times when we will play other associations in AYP, such as Virginia and Baltimore.

How much time will my child get to cheer? Your child will cheer for the entire game that they are assigned and perform during half-time.

Camp

UM GATORS Cheer Camp: The UM GATORS Cheer Camp will have a structured camp schedule focusing on skill and relationship development. The camps will be conducted by a certified staff and/or our trained coaches.

When is the camp? The cheer camp is tentatively scheduled for July 11-15, the same week as the football camp.

How much does the UM GATORS Cheer Camp cost? There is an additional cost (which is to be determined) to participate in the cheer camp. However, the UM Gators will do it's best to chose the most affordable package so that every girl has the opportunity to participate.

What if I miss the camp? If you miss camp, you will be a little behind and it is your responsibility to catch up with your conditioning and any techniques or choreography taught during the camp.

What do I need to wear to camp? Dress for the weather; shorts, t-shirt, sweat pants, etc., and no jeans. Wear the proper shoes, no flip flops or sandals.

What do I need to bring to camp? Water, towel, and an exercise mat.

Parent Council Board (PCB):

What is the UM GATORS Parents Council Board (PCB)? The PCB was formed by Coach Hawkins and the UM GATORS Executive Board to serve as the voice of UM GATORS parents, players, and cheerleaders. The PCB is comprised of a volunteer-based group of parents responsible for carrying out the goals and objectives of the organization including holding its members in the highest regard, while promoting a family-oriented experience.

How will the PCB help me or my child? The PCB will: 1) offer one-on-one tutoring services, as needed; 2) staff the UM GATORS Academic Tent (GAT) to assist UM GATORS members with homework during football and cheerleading practices, 3) plan and coordinate fun-filled activities and events for UM GATORS families and friends, 4) engage in community outreach efforts including raising awareness about the organization, and 5) seek sponsorship and funding opportunities to enhance, promote, and support the mission of the organization.

What kind of activities and events do you have planned thus far? The PCB and the Executive Board have a number of planned activities under consideration. However, we are confident that we will host a UM GATORS **Community Cook-out, Coaches Game Night** with players and cheerleaders, and a fun-fill day at **S8Zone** in Crofton, Maryland. For a tentative listing of planned events and activities, please visit the UM Gator's website and click on the **Calendar** tab for more details.

How can I get involved? If you're interested in becoming a volunteer to assist with the the services listed above and/or the planned activities and events, please contact the PCB at pcb@umgators.com.

If my son or daughter is in need of one-on-one tutoring, what should I do? To requests one-on-one tutoring, parents should contact the PCB for an agreed upon scheduled time for the tutoring session.

What is the availability of PCB staff during practices and games? PCB staff will be available during all practices and games. During practices, PCB staff will primarily be located at the UM GATORS Trailer/Tent. For easy identification, PCB staff will be in specified PCB red, black, and white tee-shirts.