



STEVEN LANE/The Columbian

The Clark College Cheerleading Club performs at a men's basketball game Dec. 18. The recently revived team has 11 members.

They've caught the spirit

Clark College cheerleader proves the power of infectious enthusiasm



Madelynn Long, who has revived the Clark College Cheerleading Club, warms up before a game.

By **BOB ALBRECHT**
Columbian staff writer

Rather than searching for a school that filled her needs, Madelynn Long stepped onto the campus at Clark College and filled one of its.

The 18-year-old Columbia River High graduate revived the college's dormant cheerleading club, marking the latest attempt to bring pompoms and high kicks courtside at Penguin basketball games.

Long is the team's founder, captain and de facto coach after a monthlong search failed to draw any interested and available aspirants.

Juggling the responsibilities of a full-time school schedule and managing the cheerleading squad that has already dipped from 24 members to 11 hasn't been easy, Long said.

"Some had never done cheerleading before and they came and tried it and it wasn't for them," Long said. "It's been quite difficult."

But, she said — illustrating some cheerleader spirit — it's also been quite rewarding.

"It's brought a lot of attention to our basketball team," said Long, who added that the team has helped her stay sharp as she prepares a bid to join a university cheer team, possibly as early as next fall.

Disbelievers snickered when fliers advertising the cheer team and its try-outs surfaced on campus, said 19-year-old Tara Wood.

"I was kind of a skeptic because I heard that Clark hasn't had a cheer team in seven, 10 years," said Wood, a high school cheerleader and member of the Vancouver Vipers semi-profes-

sional cheerleading squad. "Everyone's thinking it's a joke."

Wood's trepidations, however, disappeared when she met Long.

"I love her," Wood said. "She's had to take the brunt of criticism and go before the board and get it approved and all that. I really appreciate it. We all really appreciate her."

Denny Huston, Clark College's interim athletic director, said Long's initiative is a boon for the athletic department.

He said it's difficult to create the kind of excitement prominent at University of Oregon and Oregon State University athletic events at a school made up of commuters.

"Here, now, we have to have something special that will interest our students to come to athletic events," Huston said. "It's a matter of getting as many different ways as we can to attract our students to come to athletic events."

Huston said for a long time he's known Long's father, David Long, a mainstay on the sidelines of the Columbia River boys basketball team.

"I know her father and if she's as good at cheerleading as her dad is as a coach, we're going to have a pretty good squad," Huston said.

Only a few games into the cheer club's revival, Long is already searching for ways to ensure it remains even after she's gone. She recently tapped Wood as her successor.

Huston, though, is holding out hope she'll remain on campus.

"I'm going to try to keep her from leaving," he said.



If you go

■ **What:** A cheer camp for students in kindergarten through eighth grade taught by the Clark College Cheerleading Club.

■ **When:** Camp begins at 1 p.m. Feb. 6. The daylong program ends with a halftime performance at the men's game against Centralia College. Tipoff is at 5 p.m.

■ **Where:** Clark College Gym, 1933 Fort Vancouver Way.

■ **Cost:** \$45. Participants will receive a T-shirt and pompoms.

■ **Information:** Clark College Athletic Department, 360-992-2691.