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GTCC'S GLEASON HAS FORMED A TEAM WORTH CHEERING ABOUT

JAMESTOWN – *“Take it to the hoop, awww yeah!*

“You’ve got to shoot for two.

“You’ve got to take it, take it, take that ball, take it to the hoop!”

The cheer rings across the Ragsdale YMCA Gymnasium. It is game day and the GTCC cheerleaders are jumping and yelling for the college’s men’s basketball team to score again.

At other times the cheerleaders can be found urging the women’s basketball team to victory.

Win or lose, the cheerleaders are always the encouragers for the Titans and their fans. “It’s all about school spirit, and an appreciation for all of the hard work our teams do to represent GTCC,” said Tammy Gleason, coach for the squad.

Appreciation is needed too for the cheerleaders who spend most Saturdays practicing as well as cheering at the home games or other contests with nearby schools, Gleason said.

Gleason applauds the hard work and leadership of team captain Troy Gray and co-captain Kady Livingston, both of Greensboro, who “make the team operate like a well-oiled machine.”

Gleason, a former cheerleader in her native Long Island, NY, is the cheerleader for the cheerleaders. She is the glue that keeps the co-ed squad practicing and dealing out heavy doses of school spirit at basketball games.

On Saturdays the cheerleaders can be found practicing behind the walls of a GTCC aviation teaching center near the Piedmont Triad International Airport. They can be found standing on shoulders building sky-high tiers of cheerleaders, doing flips or simply clapping in rhythm to a favorite cheer.

The acrobatics are accompanied by a variety of cheers, Gleason said.

Over and over they do their routines. Week after week they practice in that lonely place. Gleason shouts the orders, and the cheerleading team responds as if 1,000 fans are staring at them.

“The cheerleaders really add to the exciting environment at our basketball games,” said Phil Gaffney, GTCC athletic director and men’s basketball coach. “They bring energy and enthusiasm that lifts everyone’s spirits,” Gaffney said.

Jocelyn Green, a former Page High cheerleader, echoes the squad’s common reason for cheering: “I like how we are a family.” Emma Lillycrop, a native of England and a cheerleader at Ragsdale High in Jamestown, said, “I love how close the people are on the squads....and how we all work really hard to make our squad look good on game days.”

“It helps me forget about all of the negative things that have happened...and I will be doing it until I am old,” said Cedrik Love of Burlington.

“It is my piece of comfort where I don’t have to worry about anything,” said Jeaneane Grier of High Point.

Livingston likes cheerleading for the thrill of it. "Only in cheerleading can you get tossed 15 to 20 feet in the air and live to tell about it," she said.

Gleason and Amy Burkhart-Smith came up with the idea of forming a cheering team when men's basketball was inaugurated at GTCC for the 2006-07 season. "We went and talked to the college president, Dr. (Don) Cameron, and asked him if we could start a cheerleading squad. He said, 'Go for it!'"

There was little to cheer about at the first practice. "That first tryout was a little depressing. Only two girls showed up," Gleason said. "We kept trying to get the word out, and finally got nine cheerleaders by the time we played our first game."

Without financial help from the college, the cheerleaders had to pay for their uniforms. "We did a lot of fundraising events," she said. Those early efforts have carried over to team members doing community service work and also doing fund-raisers.

The GTCC Foundation, which assists the college's athletic teams because state funds can't be used for athletics in the community colleges, put smiles on the faces of the cheerleaders after that first season. "The foundation has generously given us \$5,000," said Gleason, administrative assistant in GTCC's aviation department.

That means new, classy green, black and white attire for the cheerleaders, warm-up uniforms and practice mats for those grueling Saturday sessions.

Burkhart-Smith no longer works at GTCC, and Gleason has been the leader for the squad since its inception.

Kaylin Burns of Greensboro, a first-time cheerleader, captures Gleason's philosophy for forming the squad: "What I like about GTCC cheerleading is the pride and spirit that the team gives..."

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GTCC cheerleaders and their hometowns:

- Troy Gray, Kady Livingston, Kiana Edwards, Jeaneane Grier, Jocelyn Green, Kaylin Burns, Brooque Apple and Menisha Blassingame, all of Greensboro.
- Emma Lillycrop of Coventry, England.
- Cedrik Love of Burlington.
- Henrietta Washington of Detroit.
- Kayla Moffitt of Oakland, CA.
- Kristina Lindholm of Ft. Lauderdale, FL.
- Shaun Lemay of Thomasville.
- Stephanie Lewis of Caledon, Ontario, Canada.
- Xiomara Delagado of Ocean City, Md.
- Norman Hart of Philadelphia

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