

They jump, kick and twirl in interest of school spirit

Dallas High School Dance Team is gaining a foothold in the community.

"We just want people to know that we're here."

Caitlyn Metz
Dallas High School
Dance Team co-captain

By SARAH HITE
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The Dallas High School Dance Team wasn't jumping, kicking or twirling on the morning of November 6. The girls, bundled up in jackets, scarves, gloves and hats, were unloading doughnuts and beverages for a tailgate party in honor of the Old Shoe Game.

This is just an example of the way the 3-year-old dance team is trying to make itself known within the school and the community.

"We just want people to know that we're here," said co-captain Caitlyn Metz, 16, of Dallas.

Metz and fellow co-captain Amanda Kornak, 16, of Dallas, took the reins from longtime high school friend Alexis Kuzma, now a sophomore at Dickinson College.

Kuzma, who is studying American culture and philosophy, started the team as a way for girls to get the experience of dance without working with a private dance studio. She also wanted those involved in the performing arts to have a chance to show pride for the school's sports teams.

"So many girls and boys put their time outside of school in dance studios," the 20-year-old Kuzma said.

The girls got off to a notable

start - while making a proposal to the school board, they choreographed a dance to perform in the administration building.

"That really sparked that we really had a passion and that something needed to be put together (for the girls)," she said.

The team didn't benefit from the experience of a professional coach until moments before the first football game of 2008.

Lauren Gonzalez, 28, of Queens, N.Y., didn't really know what to expect with her first coaching experience.

"It was kind of crazy," she said. "I went to the interview on Friday, the game was on Saturday and I just met the girls at the entrance. I didn't know what I was doing."

Since then, the team has worked out a routine - sort of. "It's evolving," said Metz.

Finding a foothold at Dallas High School has been the real trouble.

"There's still a lot of bumps and kinks," said Gonzalez.

The first year the team performed only during halftime of football games. Now the team dances on the sidelines, just yards away from the cheerleaders. They create eight-count routines to the marching



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS LPOST

New recruits Kelsey Monahan, left, and Hannah Kimball try out for the Dallas High School Dance Team.

band's music and move continuously throughout the game.

The team also performs at halftime at the girls and boys basketball games and Metz's mother, Christina, says the team has been asked to perform at other sporting events, such as wrestling and volleyball.

The seven current members of the team practice once a week for an hour and a half. Gonzalez teaches and most of the other girls take private lessons. Christina Metz owns a dance studio called Take the Stage where some of the team members learned about the dance squad.

The dance team difference is that the girls have a say in how they move at games and meets.

"As far as a dance school goes, the teacher usually picks a song, gives you the dance and technique, and you per-

form at a show at the end of the year," said Gonzalez. "I want the girls to give me input and feedback. I don't want to tell them what to do."

For now, the girls are focused on getting the word out about the team's existence. They post flyers, perform at pep rallies and sponsor events like the tailgate party for the Old Shoe Game.

"It's something new and positive for the Dallas community," said Christina Metz.



New recruits try to keep up with a dance routine as they try out for the Dallas High School Dance Team.

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Left to right: Craig Tupper, community office manager; Adrienne Paley, mortgage loan specialist and Linda Ash, assistant community office manager

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