
By Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

Print Page

September 28, 2017 9:57AM

Seventh-grader is Patton's first yell leader

Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

What does Patton Junior High School seventh-grader Calvin Lex have in common with George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan, Dwight Eisenhower, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Trent Lott, Rick Perry, Mitt Romney and Franklin D. Roosevelt? The answer is cheerleading.

Cheer Coach Randa Walden said Lex is the first male student to try out and make the Patton squad since she has coached at the school. She said the team respects his work ethic and commitment.

"Calvin is extremely excited about making the squad and puts in the work. He practices all of the cheers and assigned routines on his own time, too," Walden said. "Some schools have males who are strictly yell leaders. Calvin is a fellow cheerleader, and the other members of the program have welcomed him with open arms."

Walden said male students led the first organized cheers at sporting events in the 1890s. She said women were not allowed to cheer for the first time until 25 years later.

"I am beyond thrilled to have him with us," Walden said. "Calvin is genuine about learning the sport."

Lex said he attended Fort Leavenworth's Eisenhower Elementary School for first through six grades. He said he enjoys going to different rooms for each class as a junior high school student and appreciates the diversity of activities available to seventh-graders at Patton.

"When (Patton Principal) Mr. (Ryan) Wiebe came to Eisenhower and told us about the different activities available at Patton, he mentioned cheerleading was an option open to males," Lex said. "I thought it would be interesting."

Lex said he enjoys learning the cheers and spirit chants but is looking forward to the stunt routines.

"The stunt routines involve making human towers," Lex said. "Males are usually stronger physically and can help serve as a base to hold and catch others."

Lex said he memorizes the cheers and chants relatively quickly using the program's resources on the school's Google drive.

"The coach has videos of the cheers and chants posted," Lex said. "We can practice as much as we want."

Lex said the possibility of negative treatment from others was a consideration since few male students traditionally participate in his chosen sport. However, he said most of his fellow students at Patton have been upfront with personally asking him any questions.

"I haven't had any negative things directed at me about being on the cheer squad," Lex said. "It's just like being part of any other school activity or sport. President Eisenhower was a cheerleader."

In fact, Lex is in good company indeed. Along with Eisenhower, who was a cheerleader at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, two other former modern-era presidents have been members of their school cheerleading teams. George W. Bush served as the head cheerleader for Phillips Academy in Massachusetts. Reagan was a cheerleader at Eureka College in Illinois.

Lex's mother, Rebecca, said her family requires all three sons to participate in a sport of their choice to promote physical fitness. She said Lex initially wanted to play volleyball, but there was no male team offered.

"We looked at all of the options offered, and I told Calvin there was no gender restriction for cheerleading, then asked if he'd be interested in that — he didn't know at first and then decided to try out," Rebecca said. "So, it was initially done on a lark, but by the second practice, he told me it was fun, and he wanted to stay with the team."

Wiebe said Lex participating as a member of the school's cheer squad this year means much to the school.

"This just strengthens our programs and encourages all students to participate in any activity," Wiebe said. "It's a pretty positive thing."



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT/FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Yell leader Calvin Lex, seventh-grader at Patton Junior High School, cheers with his fellow cheerleading squad members during the Patton vs. Lawrence West Middle School eighth-grade football game Sept. 19 at Normandy Field. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp

<http://www.ftleavenworthlamp.com/article/20170928/NEWS/170928654>

Print Page