

Sports/ Feature Story

The sound of sneakers squeaking echoes around the arena as the basketball players sprint down the court. The crowd cheers as Winthrop basketball team makes a shot. The audience looks like a garnet and gold celebration. Many people have their focus on the game, but Winthrop's spirit squad dancers have a lot to do with the energy and climate of the atmosphere.

When I attended a Winthrop basketball game, I was able to see all three teams in action. The Golden Claws dance team pumped up the crowd with their energetic sideline routines. The Winthrop University Cheer team showed off their tumbling skills and flexibility. The Sparkling claws jazzed things up with their stands throughout the game. The crowd was in for a treat during halftime. All three teams performed a joint dance routine. The performance was filled with acrobatics and stunts.

A lot goes into the preparation for these performances. When asking Winthrop golden claw Aaliyah Bennet how the team adapts their dance style to different events she said, "Our team considers who our audience will be during practices." The Golden Claws incorporates both jazz and hip-hop dance styles into their routines. "We keep all styles into account during practices our coach's prior knowledge of the audience also allows us to perform fitting for the occasion" Bennet said. In addition to basketball games the Winthrop spirit squad performs at competitions and school wide events.

The Winthrop Spirit Squad has been active on campus since the 90s, it originally only consisted of the golden claws dance team. The spirit squad introduced two new teams earlier this year. The sparkling claws and Winthrop University's Cheer team. The sparkling claws perform majorette styled dance routines. The Winthrop University cheer team performs sideline cheers and stunts.

"Cheerleaders are more than just poms and spirit." Said Winthrop University cheer captain Kymoree Wynn. The spirit squad members show passion for what they do. Wynn says inspiring others is just as

important as entertaining the crowd “I would like for my team to motivate and inspire little girls at our games.”

The spirit squad has managed to inspire the Rockhill community and Winthrop alumni. “It's great to see that the basketball program has grown so much that we now have a Spirit Squad.” Winthrop Alumna Cynthia Wilson James said.