

CHEERS GO SILENT

Competition Cheer Team Canceled for Remainder of Season

By Ethan Cline, Staff Writer

The competitive cheerleading season at MVNU ended at the beginning of the semester after multiple departures during the year left the roster below the minimum required to compete.

According to team members, the competitive season began with 15 members. Two stepped away earlier in the season, and then four additional athletes left within three days following Christmas break. The program had no option but to end its competition season after now only having nine members, falling just below the minimum required 10 participants. The sideline cheer squad for other MVNU athletics will still remain and practice, however.

Team members met with athletics director Chip Wilson on Thursday, Feb. 12 to discuss their concerns, opening up discussion about the season cancellation.

When asked, multiple current and former team members expressed their sadness about the abrupt ending and particular empathy for the younger athletes who will not experience a full season.

“As a senior on the team it’s really sad to see the season come to an end like this,” said former cheerleader Naomi Kinne, who now serves as the team’s graphic designer and social media manager after medically retiring. “My freshman year, traveling with the team and staying in hotels and going out to eat and all of that is how I made so many of my friends at MVNU.”

Skyler Salsberry, a former team captain, also reflected on her time in the competitive program and the tragedy of stepping away near the end of her collegiate cheer career.

“Cheerleading has been a major part of my life,” Salsberry said. “I’ve been cheering for nearly three and a half years at MVNU, including serving as a team captain just recently. My first years in the program were filled with positive experiences

like building close friendships, growing as an athlete and representing the university at games and events.”

Salsberry reflected on challenges that emerged later in the year contributing to her decision to leave, emphasizing that the choice was made with her well-being in mind. “Stepping away was a hard choice, but one I made to protect my well-being, while still holding gratitude for the years that meant so much to me and wishing the team continued success,” she said.

Students close to the situation described it as complex, listing a variety of factors that ultimately led to the team members departing. Some mentioned concerns related to coaching, while others emphasized academic stress and difficulties of balancing athletics with coursework.

The shocking and disappointing cancellation on short notice threw a wrench in what began as a promising year. Athletes recount the challenges faced—tempted to linger on what could have been different— but they ultimately look to a future season where the team will regroup and return.



Last season's competitive cheerleading team

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All-Out Vibes at the All-School Winter Retreat

By Braden Taylor, Staff Writer

MVNU is a place of opportunity, and this February, students from all classes had the very special opportunity to go on an organized winter retreat to downtown Cleveland. Settling in the urban lodge The Victor, the students spent their time playing games, watching a movie or simply relaxing. Some students even took excursions throughout Cleveland during their time there. All the students gladly seized this trip as an opportunity to grow in their relationships with their friends and with Christ.

“

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”

Dr. Jenn Ballenger, who was in charge of the retreat, took many strides to make the trip memorable and fun for all the students. “I hope with an all-campus retreat, even limiting it to 50, helped it not be too daunting for the first time,” Ballenger said in an interview. “We find incredible value in class retreats, but this was one where we wanted people from different disciplines and different classes to actually get to know each other better,” she added.

While the lodge itself was lots of fun, students went on scheduled excursions throughout Cleveland to places like

shopping districts, ice-skating rinks and even escape rooms. Each of these extra activities gave them more chances to connect and move.

Sophomore Tristan Mingus, who went on an excursion to the Crocker Park shopping center downtown said, “I really enjoyed making minifigures at the LEGO store and reliving our childhood memories at the Toys R Us, even though it was a bit small.” Mingus then added, “Overall, I am really happy to have spent this weekend with friends and worshipping the Lord!”

Saturday and Sunday morning began with “mini” chapel sessions with Lily Rheinscheld leading worship with her acoustic guitar. After that, one of the leaders would provide a story and a message and have the students break into small groups for deep, faith-based discussions.

Junior Zoey Hover said, “I think the services were enjoyable and also deeply moving, especially the singing. There was a lot of heart behind it; and because we were in such a small room setting, hearing everyone singing together was more personal and touching.” She then added, “God was definitely moving in these moments.”

With the lodge life, urban excursions and mini worship services as impactful as a normal chapel service, MVNU’s all-school winter retreat hit all the targets for a break from campus life.

Safety First: Commuters Question MVNU Inclement Weather Decisions

By Zoey Hover, Assistant Editor

Starting off the semester with large amounts of snowfall forced students and administration alike to make adjustments, but many commuters were left with safety concerns and questions of consistency regarding MVNU’s inclement weather decisions—or lack of decision.

While MVNU called three remote learning days and a two-hour delay due to the weather, commuters say they still experienced hazardous conditions while traveling to campus on in-seat class days.

One commuter, Isaiah Clark, stated, “I was halfway there, and there was this huge turn on 95, and a person in front of me—the roads were completely covered—went off and into a ditch.” Clark explained that he lives on back roads that are not plowed following bad weather but on this particular day (Jan. 19), the roads in Mount Vernon were also incredibly slippery.

Similarly, Rayne Adams, a junior commuter, said, “I almost slid off the road multiple times, both on my way to class and on my way to other events like basketball games” (as a member of pep band, she’s required to attend). Adams also recalled especially bad road conditions on Jan. 19, though MVNU chose to go remote on a less hazardous day instead.

When asked about the reasons the administration chose to go remote some days and not others, Dr. Eric Stetler, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, explained that there are “various factors” that go into their decisions and that remote days are usually declared out of an “abundance of caution.”

Stetler also stated that, whether or not MVNU’s weather committee declares a remote day or sends out warnings to commuters when they decide not to, “If there’s so many factors, it would be hard to always get ahead of something.”

While administration may not always call a remote day, commuters sometimes still miss classes due to poor road conditions, though both Clark and Adams said they were nervous to do so, as it is unclear if their absences will be excused.

Regarding excused absences, Stetler said, “We leave that up to the discretion of professors.” However, he also explained that a commuter can appeal an unexcused absence if they were unable to attend due to the weather.

Even so, commuters are still left wondering: If remote days and excused absences are not a guarantee, how can MVNU ensure their safety when winter weather strikes?



BASKETBALL BEATS NUMBER 1

The MVNU men’s basketball team earned one of its biggest wins of the season at home on Feb. 7, upsetting No. 1-ranked Grace College with the score 79-66. The Cougars (14-10, 6-8 Crossroads League) gained momentum just before halftime when Trent Koning buried a buzzer-beating three-pointer to give MVNU a 40-36 lead. A strong defensive effort held the Lancers (22-2, 12-2 CL) to 32 percent shooting and just six-of-27 from beyond the arc, while MVNU shot 43 percent from the floor and tallied 21 assists. Isaiah Brown paced the offense with 20 points off the bench, and Koning added 14 points and seven assists as the Cougars secured their statement victory over the nation’s top-ranked team.