

As cheerleading experienced significant growth and increasing popularity across the State of Maine, at recreational, school, and all-star levels, gaps began to emerge in training, education, safety standards, and access to resources, particularly across Northern and Central Maine.

Melissa Harvey, a cheerleading official with more than 30 years of experience in Maine, New England and Canada, recognized these challenges firsthand. Through decades of officiating, mentoring, and observing programs across the state, she identified a clear need for greater consistency in rule knowledge, skill progression, safety education, and coach support. While the sport continued to grow, opportunities for unified training and shared best practices did not always reach all regions or program types.

Recognizing the need for a structured, inclusive organization, Melissa began collaborating with cheer coaches from across the state. These coaches represented the full spectrum of cheerleading in Maine, including small and large town recreation programs, all-star organizations, and school-based teams from Northern, Downeast, and Central regions. Despite their diverse backgrounds and program models, these individuals shared a common passion for the sport and a collective desire to empower coaches to inspire future generations of athletes.

In early 2024, this founding group came together to establish the framework, policies, and guiding principles that would become Youth Cheer Alliance of Maine (YCAM). Through collaborative planning and shared vision, the first Board developed the organizational structure, competition standards, training opportunities, and governance needed to support coaches and prioritize athlete safety and development.

YCAM was founded with the mission to empower youth cheer coaches to inspire the next generation of athletes by promoting leadership, sportsmanship, safety, and the overall well-being and personal growth of young athletes. The organization is committed to providing coaches with the education, resources, and support necessary to make a lasting and positive impact on the lives of the athletes they serve.

Officially founded in late 2024, YCAM began its work under the leadership of its inaugural Board of Directors, whose members represented diverse regions, program types, and experiences within the cheerleading community.

The first Board consisted of:

*Heidi Ryan – President, Calais School Department*

*Krista Cyr – Vice President, Caribou School Department*

*Lauren Lugdon – Secretary, Bucksport School Department*

*Cristy Strout – Treasurer, Central School Department*

*Heather Tupper – Web Administrator, Legend Athletics All-Star Gym*

*Amanda Daley – Competition Coordinator, Trenton School System*

*Melissa Harvey – Lead Official, State of Maine*