

# Scream Team promotes spirit at school

Group creates themed support for varsity teams

BY NOLAN DAVIS  
Staff Writer

When fans watch an Albany football game, they can't help but get distracted by a group of screaming teens in costume. No, it's not Halloween or a costume party; it's just the scream team.

The scream team was created to get more people involved in the game, and to not let the crowd get quiet.

"My freshman year I was a cheerleader, and I enjoyed being involved in the game, but then I didn't cheer the next year," junior Kylea Gardner said. "I still wanted to be involved in the game, so Rachel Hill and I got together and formed the scream team."

Gardner said the scream team had been organized before, but only sporadically.

Other members have joined for a variety of reasons.

"I joined scream team because I love watching our guys play football," junior Steven Ford said. "Scream team is a way to motivate our guys and hopefully bring home a win."

Members of the thematic cheering group hope their message is clear.

"I like to think that we help the football players in the game, but I don't know if they see us," Gardner said. "I think we mainly help with crowd involvement."

The group strives to help the crowd keep the noise level high.

"We try to get the crowd excited, and when the crowd gets excited, it pumps up the players and motivates them to go for a win," Ford said.

Some aspects of participating are more fun than others.

"My favorite part is getting to dress up as crazy stuff and getting to scream on the field," sophomore Rylie Scott said. "It really gets exciting when we score or the guys get close to us at our end of the field."

The scream team typically occupies the east end zone under the scoreboard at home games, but their location can vary during out of town games.

Gardner likes to be a part of something bigger.

"I like being involved in the pep rally and getting to dress up," Gardner said. "I like being a part of the community and cheering on the football players."

Part of scream team is being true to Albany.

"I like dressing up and



Members of the Scream Team (top) cheer on the Lady Lions during a volleyball game against Hawley on Oct. 20. Three students (left) encourage players during a football game against the Perrin-Whitt Pirates Oct. 23. The group plans to continue dressing up and cheering for both teams throughout the playoff season.

PHOTOS BY NOLAN DAVIS AND RACHEL HILL

getting to yell, but I also like just being a good and loyal fan for Albany," Ford said.

Cheering on the players is fun, but it can be hard work.

"Trying to get the costumes together is always hard," Gardner said. "We normally don't have a lot of time to find things to wear each game."

Rylie Scott doesn't want to get judged.

"I hate walking in

front of the fans," Scott said. "I feel stupid when people see me wearing my costume."

Scream team is also physically hard.

"Dressing up is always hard," Ford said. "The worst part about scream team to me is waking up on Saturday morning and not having a voice."

Many memories have been made while on the scream team.

"Last season when

we played Cross Plains on Halloween was a fun night," Gardner said. "We dressed up as a theme for school, then we dressed up as zombies in the pep rally, and then Indians in the game. Then at the game, Michaela Reames was dressed as Scooby Doo, and she was supposed to be a buffalo. At one point in the game I tackled her."

Rylie Scott likes being with her fellow class-

# Youth ministers guide spiritual opportunities

Leaders join forces to reach community

BY KYLEA GARDNER  
Assistant Editor

Over the course of the last four years, several new youth ministers have made their way to Albany in hopes of leading youth physically and spiritually.

Grant Zeller, an Abilene Christian University (ACU) graduate and Albany Young Life leader, made the choice to serve local youth in May of 2011, just after he graduated.

"I always knew that I was called to youth ministry as well as being a Young Life leader, but I never expected that I would end up in Albany," Zeller said. "When I was a senior in college, I met two men named Chuck Rogers and Trey Little. They were the Presbyterian Church's pastor here at the time, and he decided to pursue me."

Zeller said that meeting changed everything.

"A few weeks later, a plan was devised between Young Life and the Feed Store," Zeller said. "Young Life agreed to send a youth leader to start up a Young Life Club in Albany, and though I tried anything I could think of to get out of coming, the Lord was really working on Trey to bring me here, so on May 4, 2011, I moved to Albany."

First Baptist Church youth leader, Thomas Aly, also found his way to Albany right out of college.

"Early on in college

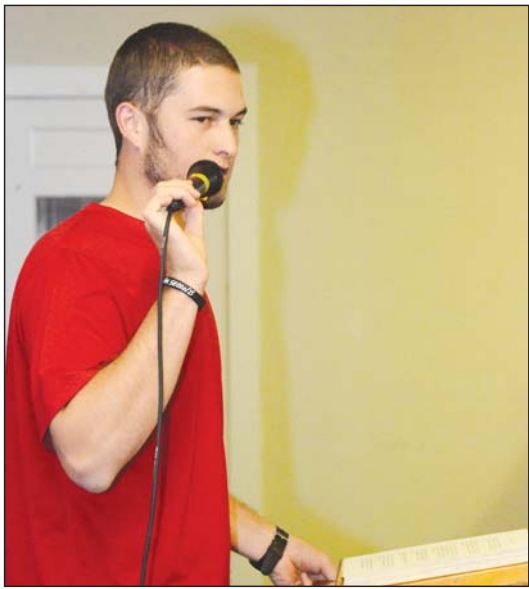
I felt really inspired to be a youth leader because I really have a heart for kids who don't have much, or kids who claim they have a relationship with God but lack the depth," Aly said. "It was actually a funny story how I ended up here. I was introduced to Albany through my college, and I sent my number in the hope of getting a ministry offer, and I was here two weeks later."

Fellow youth leader and Texas A&M University graduate, John Turner, was brought up in a Christian environment, but it wasn't until later in his teenage years that he started taking his faith seriously.

"I grew up near downtown Houston, and I was raised up somewhat a church kid, but I was definitely very uninterested," Turner said. "I spent a lot of time riding the fence, hanging out with other church members one day and then hanging with people doing completely the opposite the next. But the summer before my senior year, God completely changed my world."

Turner feels that his inspiration to become a youth leader and make Christ a big part of his life came from his youth minister as a teenager, who is now the pastor of the church where he serves.

"The summer going into my senior year, I got very close with my youth pastor at the time, Anthony Cedar, and I spent a lot of time with him going to football games and working out rather than partying and things like that," Turner said. "Being around Anthony really



Grant Zeller (top) teaches a group of students a lesson during a meeting of Young Life, which meets on Monday evenings at 7:47 at the Feed Store. Fellow youth minister, Thomas Aly, (left) reads from the Bible in a lesson given to the youth of First Baptist Church. The FBC youth meet Wednesday nights at 6:00 p.m. The youth at the Presbyterian Church meet with their new youth pastor John Turner on Sunday evenings.

PHOTOS BY CURRY WILSON AND RACHEL HILL

helped me grow in my faith, and it showed me how big of an impact a youth leader can have on a kid. I decided that would be really awesome if I could have

that kind of impact on someone, too."

The trio all agreed that there is something about Albany that is unique.

"The people in Al-

bany are very different in the sense that they spend so much time out of their busy schedules supporting students' various activities," Aly said. "You don't get that

kind of support in other places. Growing up in Early, Texas, football was a big thing there and they supported that, but Albany supports all of the students' activities from football to Fandangle."

Zeller feels that the opportunities that are given to students are unique in comparison to his hometown of Abilene.

"Albany and Abilene are completely different, but the kids and the relationships are the same," Zeller said. "Having a building in town for the youth like the Feed Store, and getting to do what I do here isn't a normal thing. Having Young Life in a town this small isn't normal either, but it's such an amazing opportunity."

Turner agreed, noting that he came from a vastly different high school.

"I wouldn't call Albany normal, because it is nothing like I am used to," Turner said. "For example, my high school was twice the size of this entire town. From the short amount of time that I have been involved in the lives of people from little kids to adults, I have found a greater sense of community here than I ever did in Houston. There's also a whole lot more openness here, whereas in my hometown everything was very private."

The three leaders made a point to express the vision that they have for the town and the youth.

"I want to see kids come to know Christ, and whatever my role, that is what I am here for," Turner said. "As for kids who don't know Jesus, I just want them to feel loved, lis-

mates and screaming with them on the field.

"I like watching Lori Davis on the scream team," Scott said. "She never misses dressing up for a game, and she is always crazy and full of excitement."

For Steven Ford, scream team is about the energy.

"My favorite scream team memory is when we played Seagraves in the playoffs last year," Ford said. "It was a great game, and it was awesome when we stormed the field after the game."

The members of the scream team hope that it becomes a tradition for students who do not play football.

"Scream team has actually been around for a while, but people just haven't participated," Gardner said. "I hope that when I'm gone, people will continue to not only dress up for football, but also for basketball and other sports."

Rylie Scott thinks that the key is to get the younger students involved.

"I think if we get some freshmen or junior high kids involved in scream team, it will continue to be a tradition," Scott said.

The scream team was originally formed several years ago, but disbanded after the organizers graduated. The group picked up again during the 2014 football season.