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MOTHERLY INSTINCTS DRIVE CHEERLEADER CARA M.

Posted 11 hours ago



Emily Adams
atlantafalcons.com



It takes a lot of time, sweat and dedication to be an Atlanta Falcons Cheerleader, but it takes all that and more to be a fulltime mom to two active little girls



Giggles bounced off the walls in the living room.

Rookie Atlanta Falcons Cheerleader Cara M. picked up her youngest daughter, Claire, in a fit of silly laughter. Touching their noses together, they shared a private moment, a loving habit between mother and daughter.

In an instant, Claire went from giving her mom Eskimo kisses to actual kisses, showering her with love and adoration.

At the same time, laughter echoed in the bedroom across from the living room.

With a burst of excitement, Cara's oldest daughter, Caroline, paraded into the living room. She was dressed in a worn, but very loved, Cinderella dress. She twirled around showing her mom her regalia.

Jumping between moments with her girls, Cara gushed over how pretty she looked and Caroline beamed, enamored by her mom's praise.

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In a house with two young children, time is constantly ticking by and moments such as these are always changing, but as a fulltime mom, Cara is able to cherish them each day, continuously strengthening the sacred bond between mother and daughter.

"I wanted to spend time with these girls because I don't get many years with them before they go to school," she said. "For me, this (being an Atlanta Falcons Cheerleader) is a side thing and it's great."

Besides being known as Claire and Caroline's mom, Cara is a fitness guru, a raw-food junkie, a professional cheerleader, a wife, a daughter and an inspiration to all those she comes in contact with.

Years from now, she hopes to be able to open a fitness studio, furthering her quest to teach women who want to better themselves. Even now, she tweets and photographs her own workouts, hoping to encourage those who follow her.

"I'm just pulling for people that need a little inspiration and need that push," Cara said, quickly switching gears to cheer on Caroline for a beautiful picture she drew.

Not only does Cara want to be an inspiration to other women, she wants to inspire both of her daughters and show them they have the power to be who they want to be. She can already see flashes of both she and her husband Jeremy at times in each girl. She only hopes that will continue as they grow, evolving into the women they will become.

As the only mom on the squad, Cara knows she's at a different place in life than the other women, finding it harder to relate to them as they do to each other.

"I think you have girls that really bond; you have girls that are around the same age, that may have boyfriends or that are single and they hang out together or they have that same kind of thing," said Cara. "Nobody really relates to me."

Being a mom on the team, however, hasn't stopped Cara from putting herself out there and creating similarities with her teammates.

Veteran Macy A., who is around the same age as Cara, took her under her wing, showing her the ins-and-outs of her first year and has helped her throughout her journey with the Falcons, quickly becoming a close friend.

Forming bonds with the other cheerleaders, although at first was tough, is minor compared to the struggles Cara faced earlier in her life, turning her into the woman she is.

Growing up in Augusta, Ga., she moved away to Savannah in her early twenties for her first husband, a feat in and of itself having never before left home. Being the dancer she was, she taught Zumba Cara-style, making it the first Zumba class to arrive in Savannah. Doing this kept her from missing her hometown, and kept her dreams of one day doing it on a more professional level alive.

Making a tough time harder, she faced the difficult decision to leave her marriage and get a divorce; she called it an unknown that terrified her. She was alone in a city that she didn't know and she was unsure how to live her life.

That's when she met Jeremy, who she knew in high school, but never dated. They'd only been together for a few weeks, when Jeremy announced he was moving to San Francisco to pursue his career, asking her to come with him.

And so, with nothing to lose, she did.

A marriage, several states and a few years later, Cara and Jeremy found their way back to Georgia, settling in Atlanta with their first blonde beauty on the way.

To this day, they have the same small television they bought on the west coast at the start of their marriage. That may seem so inconsequential to most, but to them, it is a reminder of where they've been and how far they've come as a couple and a family.

Three-fourths 80's rocker chick and one-fourth glam, Cara's warm energy is instantaneous the second you meet her, as is her caring attitude. She is happy with the person she's become, crediting her daughters for inspiring her to be the best version of herself.

"They make me better," she said of her girls.



Best of the First Half



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Walking around, picking up after Claire and Caroline, she looked at peace with where she is in life.

Her home is neat, with a chaotic touch that comes with having two children under the age of five, who are loved more than life itself. Toys are scattered in designated areas. Play mats lay on the floor between two couches, allowing the busy, close-knit family of four to be together whenever free time comes along.

"My favorite thing about being a mom is just about everything," she said smiling. "I love the responsibility of teaching my girls everything they need to know as well as molding them into being well-rounded and becoming the best they can be."



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