

Special Olympic Swimmers Training With USD Teams

By Elyse Brightman
 Elyse.brightman@plaintalk.net

After their season grind comes to an end, the swimmers at the University of South Dakota (USD) have a little more light-hearted training.

For seven years, the USD swim team has been working in the pool with Special Olympic swimmers in the spring on everything from simply getting into the water, up to different stroke techniques to prepare for meets.

Before the Special Olympics swim program was started in Vermillion, the only sports offered in Vermillion to the athletes were basketball, track and field and bowling. The USD head swim coach Jason Mahowald was contacted about starting a swim program and it's been offered ever since.

"At that point we kind of partnered up," Mahowald said. "What we do is in the spring for about eight weeks every Friday, the Special Olympics kids come over from 1-3 p.m. and we work with them."

The program is offered to athletes in first grade through high school and this year there are 17 Special Olympic athletes.

"I would say it's a very intense one on one coaching. Most of them are paired one on one, some of the high school kids are more two to one, but elementary school kids are pretty one on one



COURTESY PHOTO

The USD swim team has been working in the pool with Special Olympic swimmers in the spring on everything from simply getting into the water, up to different stroke techniques to prepare for meets.

ratio," Mahowald said.

For the USD swimmers, it's not mandatory but Mahowald never seems short of volunteers.

"It's completely voluntary," Mahowald said. "I just ask for volunteers from the team to help out and I think this year we've got about 20. Some are here for the full two hours, some are here for part of the beginning and are here for part of the end."

The amount of progress seen in the eight weeks can't be measured in numbers, but can be seen in the progress of athletes' abilities and the

smiles on their faces.

USD junior and swim team member Rachel Svendsen says getting the younger athletes into the water for the first time isn't about swimming abilities, but rather stepping outside of a comfort zone.

"They don't want to (get in) because it's kind of scary, but once they get to know you better they trust you a lot more," Svendsen said.

Svendsen has been volunteering for three years. She started her freshman year because some older teammates talked about how

much fun it is. Every year, the swimmers are paired with a different Special Olympics athlete and this year she is paired with a swimmer named Joey who wouldn't get into the water the first week, and at week three he is already swimming halfway across the pool without help.

"It's really exciting for me just knowing that he used to be afraid to go in and it wasn't fun for him and now he's the first one in that wants to get in the pool.

SWIM | PAGE 13

Finnegan, Bye Present Polished Stone Challenge

Two Vermillion high school seniors, Regan Bye and Rachel Finnegan, recently demonstrated to their local 4th and 5th grade students how their character can be compared to a polished stone. Earlier this school year the two were selected by their school administrators, along with 104 high school seniors from all across the state, to carry an important message of character to their elementary and middle school students. Bye and Finnegan are part of this year's annual SD Youth Foundation's Hometown Heroes of Character poster project.

This year's platform message is called, "A Click Away From Chaos, polishing your character in a social media centered world!" Bye and Finnegan shared some of the conveniences that come along with social media and the internet but more importantly they shared the pitfalls of misusing today's technology. Following their visit with the younger students, they challenged their local students to carry a polished stone in their pocket for two weeks as a reminder that they should always try their best to make choices will help them polish their character.

The Hometown Heroes shared specific moments with their students when it would be very appropriate to reach for their polished stone. Some of these



COURTESY PHOTO

Regan Bye and Rachel Finnegan, recently demonstrated to their local 4th and 5th grade students how their character can be compared to a polished stone as part of the S.D. Youth Foundation's Hometown Heros of Character project.

moments included:

-Will this text message I am sending be perceived as smooth or rough for

me or others?

-Before I choose to pass along the latest bit of gossip about one of my schoolmates will this make them or myself a more polished person?

-Before I choose to be critical about others will my actions help promote friendships or will my actions push us further apart?

-At the end of the day, the elementary students will be asked to review their actions. Did my actions lead me to be more like a polished stone or was I a little rough around the edges. Bye and Finnegan are a part of a statewide character building initiative that includes Hometown Heroes from 45 South Dakota communities from across the entire state. Collectively, all of these Hometown Heroes will take the "polishing your character message," to 15,000 to 20,000 students statewide. You can view the Hometown Heroes regional video message that was presented to your local students by going to sd4h-foundation.org. This same site will have a poster file which features all of the Hometown Heroes from your region of the state.

For additional information related to the program please feel free to contact the poster project coordinator Phil Olson at Philip.olson@sdstate.edu.

USD Scientist Seeks Public Volunteers

University of South Dakota biologist Jake Kerby, the eastern South Dakota coordinator for the national organization FrogWatch USA, will train interested citizens April 25 to conduct field research on local frog species and populations.

The training will take place from 3:00-6:00 p.m. in Room 145 of the Churchill Haines building on the campus of the University of South Dakota.

According to Kerby, the training will enable members of the public to recognize different frogs and different frog calls. This will allow citizen scientists to conduct field research and document the types of frogs they hear, and where they hear them.

Kerby adds that shrinking frog numbers in recent years makes frog research especially important.

"Training citizens to help perform this research expands the areas where we can gather information, and this is extremely useful to our understanding of frogs," said Kerby. "The information provided by citizens helps us learn which amphibians are in trouble, and which ones are not in trouble."

Kerby advises anyone interested in frogs or nature to visit the national FrogWatch website at: <https://www.aza.org/frogwatch>

Hanson Honored For Public Service

USD Professor Elizabeth Hanson was honored for outstanding public service in her role as president of the South Dakota Speech-Language-Hearing Association, receiving the Blair and Linda Tremere Faculty Service Award in the College of Arts & Sciences.

"It's important to me to improve the lives of people with disabilities," she said. "That's been my professional mission statement since I started working as a speech-language pathologist."

Hanson performs research in communications sciences and disorders and teaches both undergraduate and graduate classes in Augmentative and Alternative Communications, Advanced Communication Science, Theories and Methods of Graduate Study and Research, and Neuromotor Speech Disorders.

In her role leading the Speech-Language-Hearing Association Hanson helped provide continuing education training for speech-language pathologists and audiologists so they could better help their clients with speech, language, swallowing, hearing, balance, and processing disorders. Hansen and a coalition of other professionals work with the state Department of Education to make sure all children who need help with communication have a plan in place before they start school.

"It's been extremely gratifying to fulfill my professional mission in this way," she said.

Hanson joined USD in 2005. She earned her master's degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her doctorate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The award was established in 2011 by Blair and Linda Tremere of Golden Valley, Minn., to encourage and recognize the valuable role that Arts & Sciences faculty play in the lives of their communities and states.

USD Student Groups Recognized

Three student groups at the University of South Dakota were recognized by the South Dakota Board of Regents for their academic achievement, community service and organizational leadership.

Kappa Alpha Theta received the Award for Academic Excellence, holding the top sorority grade point average on the USD campus for 41 of the past 45 semesters. It recently broke its own record with a cumulative GPA of 3.545, including 41 members with perfect 4.0 GPA. Chapter members represent more than 25 different majors and are involved in 31 different pre-professional organizations. Kappa Alpha Theta President Brianna Davis of Dell Rapids received the award.

The Community Service Award went to Alternative Week of Off-Campus Learning (AWOL), which encourages active citizenship through service-learning experiences held off-campus. AWOL President Ashley McKeown of Sioux Falls accepted the award. Through AWOL students are exposed to diverse social issues and are encouraged to apply their experiences after they return to campus. Core values of diversity, education and application are stressed.

Lambda Chi Alpha received the Award for Organizational Leadership for its program stressing extracurricular involvement on campus and in the community. Recent projects include serving in the USD Student Government Association, sorority and fraternity life, ambassadorships, sports activities and the Campus Activities Board. The chapter hosts speakers each week who talk about a wide range of topics from professional development to career networking. Lambda Chi alpha President Nicholas Bratvold of Brandon received the award.

Learn about fascinating new advancements in using our genetic code to customize patient care.



Jan Haugen-Rogers
 Vice President, Imagenetics
 Sanford Health

Vermillion Event Center

912 N Dakota St • Vermillion, SD

Please join us for a very special evening designed just for you. Enjoy delightful hors d'oeuvres, fun shopping and an educational presentation on women's health.

Bring a Friend!

Please RSVP to Jill Christopherson
 by Monday, April 27, 2015
jill.christopherson@sanfordhealth.org
 or (605) 638-8465