



**SPMS**

SOUTHERN PACIFIC MASTERS SWIMMING

MAY-JUNE 2024

**NEWSLETTER**





# WATER, THE GREAT EQUALIZER

Submitted by: *Christie Civalo* }  [OpenWater@SPMasterSwim.org](mailto:OpenWater@SPMasterSwim.org)

► “I try and be an Olympian-quality coach to everyone. When a coach believes in you, even if you’re non-verbal, even if you have physical difficulties, even if you start out afraid of the water – you can succeed. I try and emulate the coaches that I had that believed in me. My personal goals are to coach my swimmers, both in and out of the water. I teach swimming and life skills.”

Mikey Flaherty has been a swimmer her entire life. She was an age-grouper on the East Coast and in 1993 was recruited to swim for USC by Head Coach Mark Schubert and his assistant coach Erika Hansen Stebbins (currently long-time coach of UCLA

Bruin Masters). Mikey participated in the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Trials in the 200IM and 400IM, and was ranked 28th in the world in the 400IM. She was a USC team member from 1993 to 1998 (red-shirting her junior year) and received a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with an emphasis on Child Development in December 1998.

“Growing up, I would work out early by myself to get to school on time. I was lonely and I use to dream about having a team where all different personalities and abilities could come together. At meets I loved watching teams that cheered for each other, swam

relays together, shared meals, and had real camaraderie.”

In 2010, Mikey went to a meditation workshop, giving herself the opportunity – and permission -- to review her life goals and her desire to share her love of swimming with others. During those 10 days, she came up with a plan and a name. As Founder and Executive Director of “Swim with Heart,” Mikey found a home for her 501(c)(3) not-for-profit at Santa Monica Swim Center. Nick Waters, Swim with Heart’s masters coach and another life-long competitive swimmer, laughs, “The Swim with Heart name is so Mikey. She has this all-encompassing warmth that includes everyone in its path.”

Swim with Heart had an extremely successful start. Mikey’s program took the best of what she learned and turned it into a program that supported adults and children of all abilities, giving them newfound confidence, strength, and skills that indeed translated beyond the pool’s edge. Non-verbal kids learned to form words by blowing bubbles, people who struggled with social skills became a welcome part of a team, and children whose parents thought they would never walk developed that ability and were even able to jump. Mikey’s vision was going, well, swimmingly!

However, in 2017, Mikey’s life experienced a dramatic turn. “It was awful,” remembers Mikey. “I was at my office, and everyone had gone home. Suddenly, I couldn’t see and I had a really, really, bad headache. I got in my car and went home for three days. I thought I had strep throat because I couldn’t swallow. The whole world slowed down. I missed appointments and a friend came to check on me and took me to urgent care. I was immediately sent to the hospital and was diagnosed with having had a stroke.”

Despite struggling with her health, Mikey wanted to make sure her Swim with Heart students had the support they needed to continue to flourish. She found Coach Nick at the perfect time. Nick, also a lifelong swimmer, was Florida state champion swimming for the prestigious Pine Crest School from 7th to 12th grades, even taking a gap year after high school to train with a small group of elite swimmers in Italy. After Italy, Nick went on to swim for Stanford University under coach Skip Kenny. In college, Nick swam the breaststroke and the 200 IM, and went to 2012 London Olympic Trials in the 100 and 200 breaststroke. After trials, he retired from swimming and earned a Bachelor of

Science degree in Science, Technology & Society and a minor in Film Studies in 2014, and a Master of Arts degree in Communication in 2016, both from Stanford.

After graduation, Nick found a studio apartment in Venice and booked some commercials and modeling to pay the rent. “A swim buddy told me about a coaching gig at New Roads Middle School. I got the job, but it was such a short season that parents came to me hoping to keep their kids in the pool year ‘round.” Nick continued, “I was looking to rent lanes at SMC for my students, right when Mikey was coming back from her stroke. She was looking for a reliable coach to take over her masters program, and I was looking for a team and lanes. It was a perfect match.”

Mikey can rely on Nick to always be there for those early morning workouts. “The thing about mornings is, you can’t be late,” says Mikey. “I don’t worry about Nick waking up. I feel that the masters program is growing and there is a great energy. I love that those who show up want to be there. It’s a commitment to get up in the dark and jump in a cold pool – and THEN go to work!”

Mikey has curated the Swim with Heart group dynamic and emphasized togetherness. There are noontime workouts on the weekends, when the special needs swimmers and the masters swimmers occasionally combine, and at times, share the same lane. “I love that inclusivity,” says Mikey. “That’s mandatory with our team. I love that typical workout lanes are right next to atypical lanes and we are all brought together by our love of swimming.”

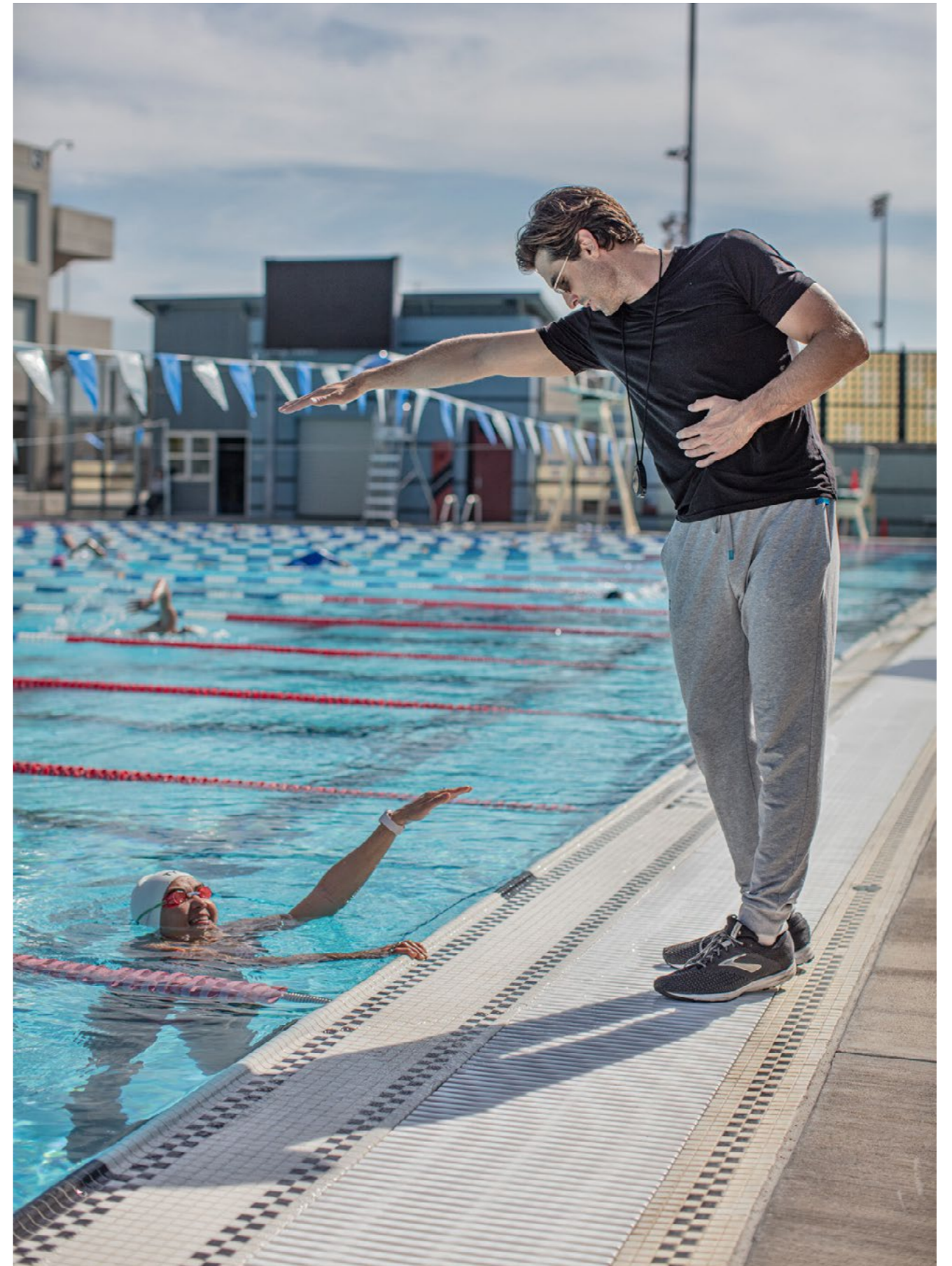
“It works very well for us because everyone is so supportive,” she explains. “I really enjoy teaching and I’ve been coaching for many years. All of our SWH participants love swimming and they want to improve and get faster. That means different things to different swimmers. For one it might be to swim in the Regional Championships, for another it might mean taking five consecutive arm strokes. The goals are the same, no matter the level achieved.”

With a wonderful team of swim instructors and coaches onboard Swim with Heart, Mikey has become very active off the deck working together on all things aquatic with the City of Santa Monica. Recently, she was unanimously elected the vice chair

of current issues for the Santa Monica Aquatics Advisory Committee. This committee advises the city regarding pool usage, allotment, and administration, and how to run pools efficiently and effectively while serving as many resident demographics as possible. She also helps her special needs masters swimmers to find jobs. “We have successfully placed three of our swimmers in part time jobs. We’re constantly looking for local business owners and managers who can help us by hiring our swimmers. Showing up

to swim regularly shows that they are interested, responsible and committed.

“Water is a great healer,” says Mikey. “Confidence in the water, safe swimming skills, healthy lifestyles, and competition provide essential life lessons that extend beyond the pool. We want our swimming lessons and workouts to cultivate independence and self-confidence, and to inspire our swimmers with the courage to be productive members of society.”





# 2024 SPMS SCY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Submitted by: *Robin Smith* | [ViceChair@SPMasterSwim.org](mailto:ViceChair@SPMasterSwim.org)

► Congratulations to the 220 participants in the 2024 SPMS SCY Championships (April 5th to 7th) hosted by CCAT Masters at Crespi Carmelite HS in Encino CA! We would like to thank the Host, Officials and all of the Volunteers for a fun and safe event!

## INDIVIDUAL HIGH POINT WINNERS:

**WOMEN 18-24**  
**MELIKA RAMIN**  
 CVMM

**WOMEN 30-34**  
**PAULA VEGA**  
 CVMM

**WOMEN 25-29**  
**MCKINLEY BECRAFT**  
 OC RIPT

**WOMEN 35-39**  
**SEDA KISACIK**  
 ROSE

**WOMEN 40-44**  
**LEX HIGLETT**  
 OREG

**WOMEN 45-49**  
**CHRISTINA TSENG YEN**  
 ROSE

**WOMEN 50-54**  
**HEIDI KHALIL**  
 ROSE

**WOMEN 55-59**  
**ARLETTE GODGES**  
 TRB

**WOMEN 60-64**  
**BECKY CLEAVENGER**  
 CVMM

**WOMEN 65-69**  
**VERONICA HIBBEN**  
 OC RIPT

**WOMEN 70-74**  
**SALLY GUTHRIE**  
 SACMA

**MEN 18 - 24**  
**JOSHUA GARCIA**  
 ROSE

**MEN 25 - 29**  
**NIKITA BONDARENKO**  
 WH20

**MEN 30 - 34**  
**RALPH PORRAZZO**  
 ROSE

**MEN 35 - 39**  
**MARK BARHAM**  
 GRA

**MEN 40 - 44**  
**ERIK GUZMAN**  
 WH20

**MEN 45 - 49**  
**DAVID POPKO**  
 ROSE

**MEN 50 - 54**  
**BRAD SHENFELD**  
 UCLA

**MEN 55 - 59**  
**BRENT FORD GRA & BRIAN STRATE SDSM (TIE)**

**MEN 60 - 64**  
**JAMES RIDDLE**  
 NOVA

**MEN 65 - 69**  
**TITO MORALES UCLA & JOHN MORALES SRM (TIE)**

**MEN 70 - 74**  
**GLENN GRUBER**  
 ROSE

**MEN 75 - 79**  
**MIKE SELNA**  
 CMAC

**MEN 80 - 84**  
**PETER RONAY ROSE**

**MEN 85 - 89**  
**EVERETT SMETHURST NOVA**

TOP FIVE TEAM AWARDS:





# WHO'S IN THAT LANE?

Submitted by: *Mike Matthews*

► There's a story in every lane. That's what showcase as we introduce our Conejo Valley Multisport Masters (CVMM) swimmers each month. In this third edition of Who's In That Lane?, I am proud to highlight all of us who participated in CVMM's CVMM 9th Annual Matt Biondi Short Course Yards Masters Meet on Saint Patrick's Day – March 17th.

So who's in that lane for March, 2024? A lot of awesome swimmers and volunteers!

CVMM 9th Annual Matt Biondi SCY Masters Meet on Saint Patrick's Day – March 17th was a huge success. In the six weeks leading up to the event, Coach Nancy challenged all CVMM swimmers to either swim in the event or volunteer for it. While I don't know the exact numbers, I would say that at least 80% of our club members met that challenge.

Many of our club swimmers and our family members volunteered to be timers for the event. We had swimmers in charge of the snack bar. And every item in the snack bar was donated by

our swimmers.



The snack bar gave swimmers and spectators needed nutrition, provided some revenue for our club, and was the source of happiness as our snack cart provided very popular and very free snacks for our volunteer timers and our officials. Perhaps our most popular volunteer was Patti Lownes –, our meet leprechaun decked out in green St. Patrick's day garb! Several people commented that the leprechaun made the event much more festive, that kids loved the little trinkets she passed out, she made the pictures of pentathlon medal winners way better, and her luck of the Irish brought out a lot of smiles. My wife was a former college team mascot (Go Josie Bruin!), and she says that one of the keys to a mascot role is to fully embrace it, to make big moves, and to smile the entire time. I would say that Patti did all of that and more.



We had 158 swimmers in the meet. It seemed like more as the sun rose, the fog lifted, and the lanes opened for warmups. There were 8-10 swimmers in each lane, all of us trying to get loose and warm in the perfect water temperature, and the sunny but still cool March weather. All of our team swimmers were festively decked in a St. Patrick's Day green swim cap. A far cry from the full day meets or even three day meets, this meet only had five individual events. It was a pentathlon format, with 50 yard events in Butterfly, Backstroke, Breaststroke, and Freestyle, then a 100 yard IM. All of the times were added up, and for those who competed in all of them, there was a Pentathlon contest.

The meet started right on time – at 8:30 AM, moved very quickly, and was over by 12:30. Many swimmers loved how quickly the meet moved, though CVMM's Calley Prezzano said, "I wish there were more swimmers – so I'd get a little more rest between events!" No rest for anyone at this meet, Calley! As Dori said in Finding Nemo, "Just keep swimming!"

There were lots of shoutouts for Craig Eisenberg, AKA, "The Swim Guy." One of our guest swimmers, David Johannsen, found the perfect goggles for the Special Olympics swimmers he coaches, and he bought 20 pairs. Craig is at almost every meet in Southern California. He feeds off the energy of the meets, his presence makes every meet more festive, and he lends credibility to each meet. I try to buy something from Craig at least once a year, and I did walk away with a new suit this time. In talking with him afterwards, he told me he loved the short meet, and that he would do anything for coach Nancy. I love seeing these two legends supporting each other and building up our swimming community. Please check him out at <https://theswimguy.com>.

There were also shoutouts for longtime race official Virgil Chancy. One of our guest swimmers said, "I keep telling him to look the other way and that there's nothing to see when I swim but he never listens!" Virgil is a highly respected leader, volunteer, and race official in the US Masters swimming community, recently winning the 2023 US Masters Dorothy Donnelly Service Award. And unlike the commenter, I made sure to have two-handed touches in butterfly and breaststroke. It's not that hard! Thanks for making our meet better, Virgil!



Seeing old friends is one of the things that's very cool about masters swimming. Matt Biondi said it when he welcomed all of the swimmers to the meet. I would say that every single person on the pool deck stopped what they were doing and listened to the 8-Olympic-gold-medal-winner as he expressed his appreciation for all attending the meet, then shared his love of reconnecting with old friends at this and all masters swim meets. Matt made everyone feel special and welcomed with his sincerity, humility, and humor. Everyone laughed when he ended by saying he was looking forward to the 50-yard freestyle event, but he wanted nothing to do with the next event, the 50 yard breaststroke, which was in his words, "something I know nothing about."

One of the cool comments was from Jill King, who had not seen coach Nancy Reno since the 1970s. She said, "Nancy and I competed as 13-14 year olds in Northern CA in the late 60s early 70s. This was our first time meeting once again on the pool deck! Quite surreal! The competition is great and stimulating for all, yet some of the most memorable and touching moments happen between the races!" That's beautiful, Jill. Thank you.

The highlight of this annual meet is always the 50-yard freestyle. Lex Higlitt, in the 40-44 age group, from Oregon, was the fastest female swimmer with a time of 26.14. And Ralph Porrazzo, in the 30-34 age group, from the Rose Bowl Masters, was

the fastest male swimmer at 21.42. Everyone loved swimming in the same race as Matt Biondi. Beata Konopka, a CVMM swimmer, said, "I am grateful that I can compete with Matt Biondi and hear his stories." Me too, Beata! And while a few younger swimmers can brag that they beat Matt in our meet, his 23.96 time won his age group, and every single person in the pool had their eyes glued on his race. If I had just swam my 50-yard freestyle a mere five seconds faster, I could have been one of the few to beat him. If I had been in his heat, I would have finished five body lengths behind him – but the good news is that he would not have lapped me in that two-lap race! As Lloyd Christmas said in Dumb and Dumber, 'So you're telling me there's a chance! Yeah!'

**So many swimmers expressed appreciation for the little things that made this meet so special and enjoyable:**

- One of our guest swimmers said, 'I know it's silly, but I do love the medals! I'm over 70 and I feel "glee," like a kid, when awarded one!'
- Walt Jiminez from UC33 said, "Well run, highly professional coaches, meet officials, starters, refs...everything was top-notch!"
- Lots of swimmers loved that they set PRs!
- Bill Marshall commented that because of all of his CVMM teammates' help, we had an "amazingly quick setup and take down that was very efficient and organized."
- CVMM's Tom Pani added, "It was fun: the gift baskets, green swim caps, high point awards, Matt Biondi trophy, relays, the team spirit, seeing all our team mates there, both as volunteers or competitors. Everyone seemed to be having a good time."
- My sometimes lanemate Maria Calhoun added, "My first meet in 45 years!! Loved being back competing!"
- And for me, it was the first time I swam butterfly, backstroke, or breaststroke in a meet in over fifty years! If you saw my times, that fact would not surprise you.

So thanks to all who swam in the lanes, to all of those who supported the swimmers, and of course to Coach Nancy Reno, for all she did, and for all of us smiling the whole time. CVMM's 9th Annual Matt Biondi swim meet was a great success because of all of you!

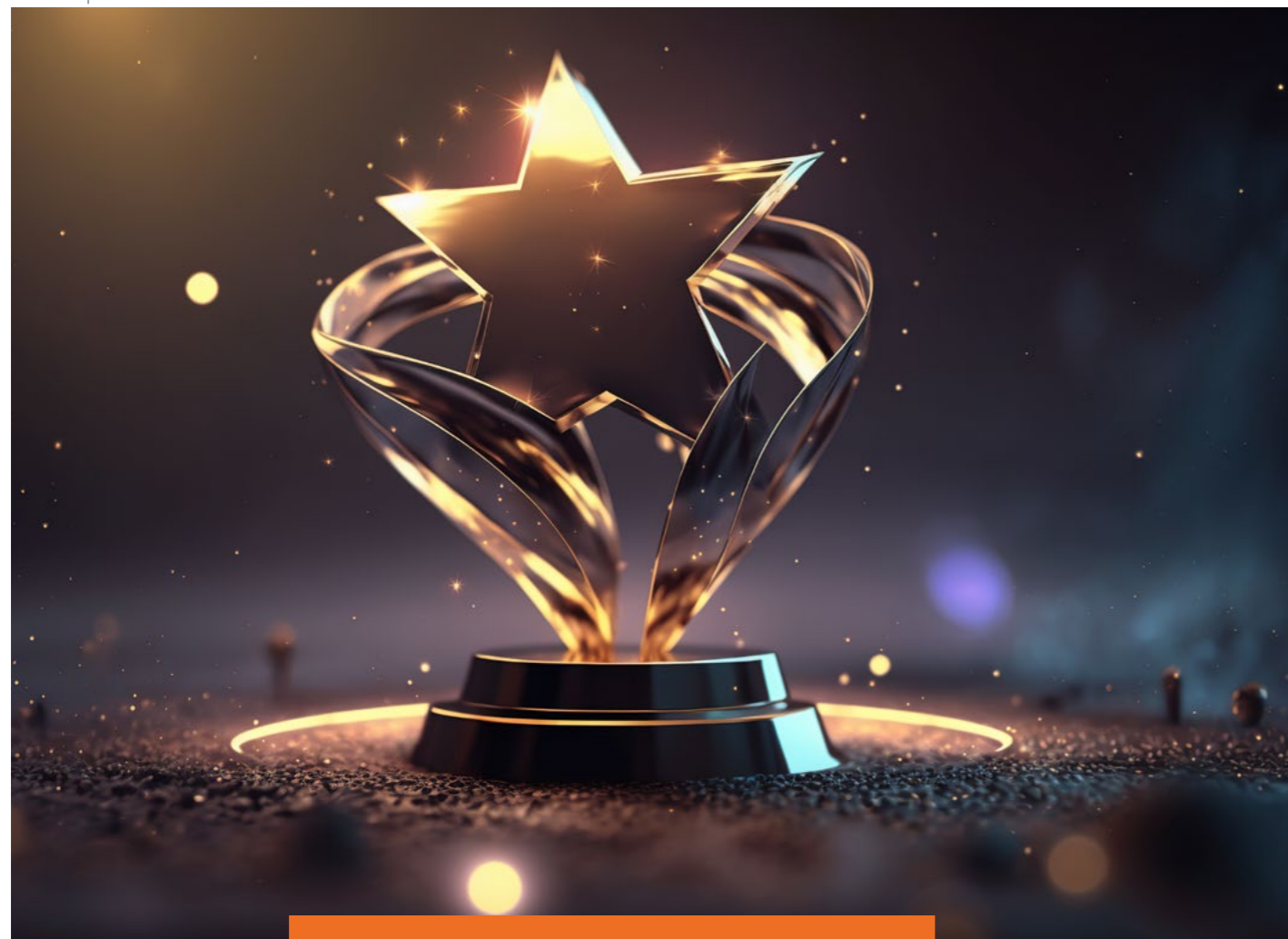
<https://drmdmatthews.com/whos-in-that-lane-march-2024/>



**Photo Credits:**

- Foggy Sunrise Picture by Debbie Siemer (Beautiful!)
- Thanks to Beata Konopka, for her constant smiling, her reminders of how lucky we are to swim together, for the "drink up bitches" picture and the happy timers picture, and for all of her teammate selfies.

- All other photos taken by Brad Stanley. Brad's professional and beautiful pictures make everyone happy, and I'm grateful for his dedication and artistry.
- All of these photos were posted on CVMM's Facebook Page – Thanks to all who contribute!



# NOMINATE YOUR TEAMMATES

DUE JULY 1 - USMS ANNUAL AWARDS  
DEADLINE APPROACHES

Submitted by: *Christie Civalo* } ✉ [OpenWater@SPMasterSwim.org](mailto:OpenWater@SPMasterSwim.org)

► Nominations forms are here:  
<https://www.usms.org/volunteer-central/awards>

Do you have an individual who makes amazing contributions to USMS – out of the water? Every year, USMS recognizes and celebrates the extraordinary efforts of volunteers who contribute to the organization while “on deck.” If you know of such a person, please nominate them for the appropriate USMS award listed below.

## Coach of the Year | Nomination due July 1

The Coach of the Year award is presented annually to a USMS registered coach who demonstrates excellence in club and individual accomplishments, publications, contributions to USMS and the LMSC, letters of support, and long-term contributions to Masters Swimming.

## Dorothy Donnelly Service Award | Nomination due July 1

This award is presented annually to USMS registered individuals whose volunteer service contributes to the growth, improvement, and success of USMS locally, regionally, and/or nationally.

## Kerry O'Brien Coaches Award | Nomination due July 1

This award recognizes USMS coaches who are building membership nationwide and who bring passion, dedication, and heart to the pool deck.

## Club of the Year Award | Nomination due July 1

Successful USMS clubs develop programs that draw people in, support their swimmers, and set standards for other clubs to follow. This annual award recognizes the efforts of the clubs that embody these attributes. Clubs may nominate themselves or be nominated by others. Once a club receives this award, that club may not be nominated again for a period of five years.

## Diversity Equity and Inclusion Award | Nomination due July 1

The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Award is presented annually to USMS-registered athletes, coaches, volunteers, and clubs who show a public commitment to diversity, equity, equality, and inclusion across race, gender, age, religion, identity, and ability. The award recognizes individuals or clubs that create a diverse and inclusive environment in USMS, thereby making everyone feel empowered to bring their full, authentic, unique selves to the sport.

## Fitness Award | Nomination due July 1

A Fitness Award nominee is someone who by their example encourages others to seek fitness through swimming as a lifestyle (competition is not required). This individual provides encouragement through social interaction in and out of the water to keep people involved in a fitness lifestyle within their swimming community.

## June Krauser Communications Award | Nomination due July 1

This award is presented annually to a USMS-registered individual or group, whose work in communications has contributed to the growth, improvement, or success of USMS locally, regionally, or nationally.

## Long Distance National Championship Award | Nomination due July 1

This award is presented annually to a USMS registered individual or group who has made significant contributions to the success and promotion of USMS Long Distance National Championship events. These events include the Virtual Championship and Open Water events.

## National Championship Meets Award | Nomination due July 1

This annual award is presented to an individual who makes significant contributions to USMS National Championship meets. The award recognizes efforts to assist USMS and meet hosts in providing excellent competitive conditions for championship racing or otherwise contributing to the success of USMS National Championships or national championship-level competitions (including international meets) held in the U.S.

## Officials Excellence Award | Nomination due July 1

The Officials Excellence award is given to a certified official in recognition of outstanding and significant contributions to USMS at the international, national, zone, and/or local level, including pool and open water competitions. The nominee is not required to have membership in USMS and may be currently active, retired or deceased. An individual may only receive this award one time.

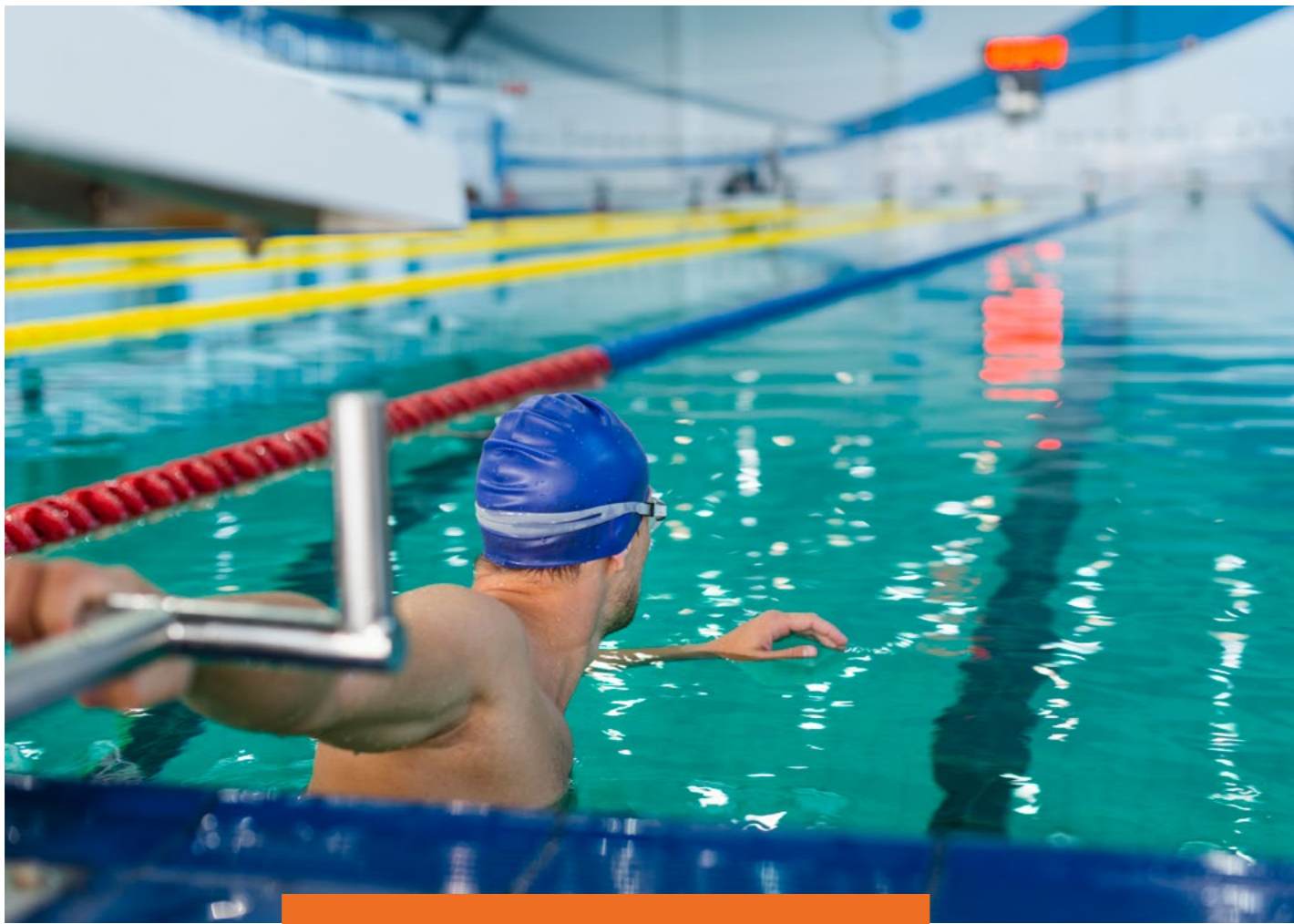
## Open Water Service Award | Nomination due July 1

This award honors individuals who have made significant service contributions to promoting and building excellence in USMS open water swimming in the following ways: embodies the USMS mission, vision, goals, and objectives through open water swimming service; contributes to open water notably in several roles (i.e., USMS Open Water/Long Distance national committees, LMSC open water/long distance chair, event and/or safety director, official, coach, clinician, and/or volunteer); contributes to open water notably at different levels of USMS (i.e. national, zone, LMSC, and/or local); or demonstrates extraordinary measurable service achievement and impact.

## Ted Haartz Staff Appreciation Award | Nomination due July 1

This award celebrates USMS volunteer roots, as well as the future of USMS, specifically by recognizing a volunteer or group of volunteers each year who demonstrates excellence in assisting and supporting the National Office staff with its professional duties of serving USMS members and promoting Masters Swimming.





# SWIM BETTER TOGETHER!

Submitted by: *Anita Cole* }  [Marketing@SPMasterSwim.org](mailto:Marketing@SPMasterSwim.org)

► Swim better together by joining a convenient Master Club! Please reach out to unattached Masters Swimmers in your pool or elsewhere to welcome them to join your club. Overcome obstacles and Swim Better Together!

If you need help with Instagram posting of your club's events, please contact Ralph Porrazzo at [rporrazzo@rosebowlaquatics.org](mailto:rporrazzo@rosebowlaquatics.org)

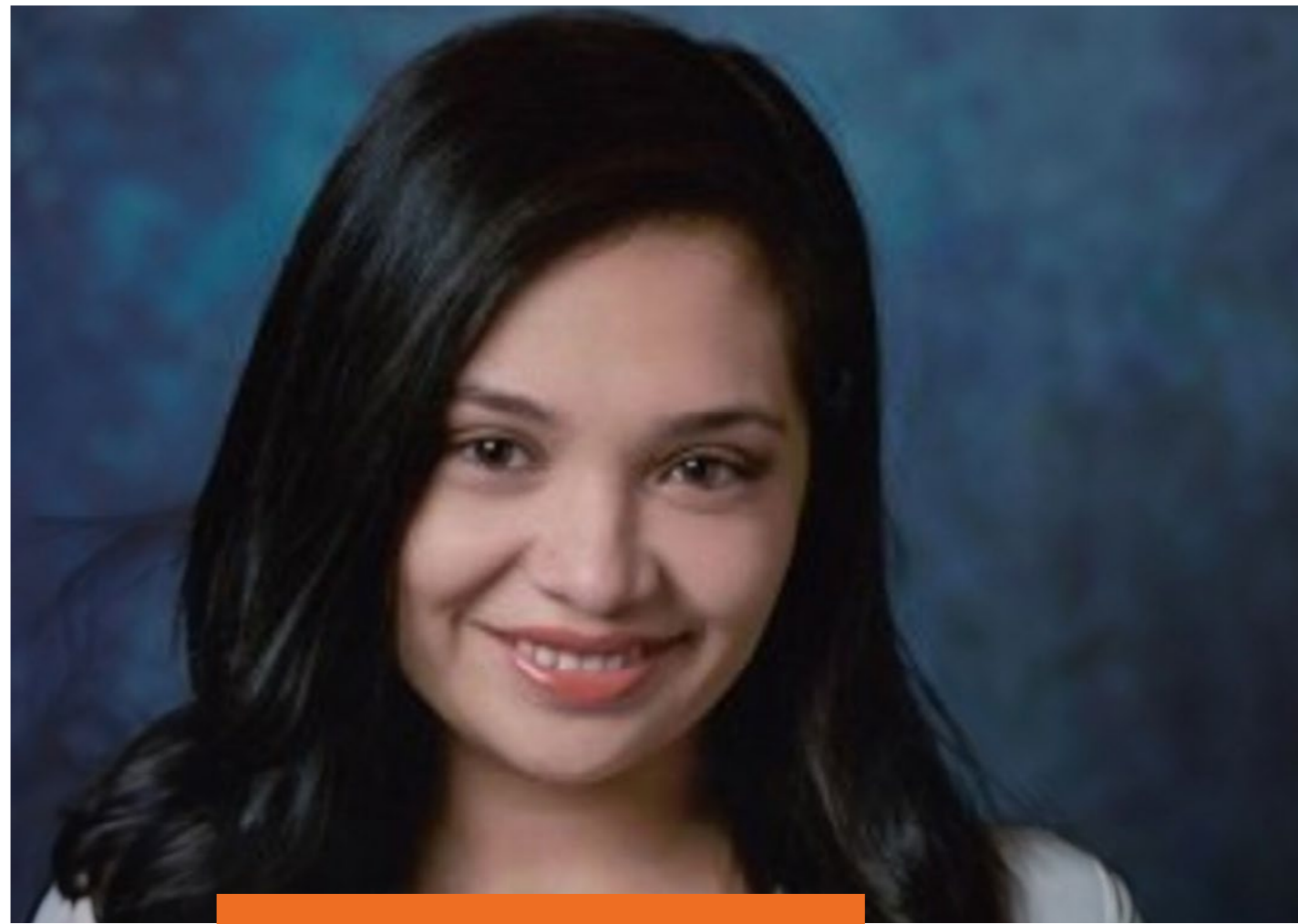
For graphic design help contact Luci Davies at [Lucila.Davies@gmail.com](mailto:Lucila.Davies@gmail.com)

If your club would like SPMS Marketing Materials like caps, stickers, and luggage tags, please email [Anita.chixwithstix@gmail.com](mailto:Anita.chixwithstix@gmail.com)

Remember we are always better together!

Feel free to contact me for any help you or your club needs. I am available.

Anita Cole  
SPMS Marketing and Club Development Chair  
310-367-4606



# SWIMMER OF THE MONTH AT UNIDOS MASTERS SWIM TEAM

Submitted by: *Lucila Davies* }  [Secretary@SPMasterSwim.org](mailto:Secretary@SPMasterSwim.org)

► This month, we are thrilled to shine the spotlight on Alex Murillo, our Swimmer of the Month at Unidos Masters Swim Team. Alex's unwavering enthusiasm and dedication to swimming are evident in her relentless pursuit to enhance her technique, speed, and abilities. Moreover, her efforts extend beyond the pool, as she plays a crucial role in promoting our team and encouraging new members to join.

Unidos Masters Swim Team is a vibrant, inclusive community

that thrives on collaboration and fun in the aquatic environment. Our coaches are skilled and knowledgeable, offering varied workouts that cater to all skill levels—from beginners to competitive swimmers. Our team members range in age from 18 to over 75, all united by a passion for swimming and improving together.

Alex has been instrumental in spreading the word about the joy

and camaraderie at Unidos. Her proactive approach has not only brought new swimmers to our lanes but also helped foster a familial atmosphere where everyone can thrive. Her infectious enthusiasm motivates both new and seasoned swimmers to push their limits and enjoy every splash.

At Unidos, we believe swimming is for everyone. We encourage interested individuals to join us at Van Ness Aquatic Center, where practices are held every Tuesday and Thursday from 6-7 PM. Whether you're looking to improve your strokes or just want to enjoy a great workout in a supportive setting, Unidos is the place to be.

Join us in congratulating Alex Murillo for being an exemplary member of our team and a true ambassador of the sport. Her contributions are a testament to the spirit of Unidos Masters Swim Team—where every swimmer is valued, and every lap counts.



## UPCOMING SPMS EVENTS

- MAY  
16

**MAY 16 | THURSDAY**  
SPMS Committee Conference Call
- MAY  
19

**MAY 19 | SUNDAY**  
Mission Viejo Masters LCM Meet
- MAY  
24

**MAY 24 - 26 | THU-SUN**  
Speedo Grand Challenge (dual sanction)
- JUN  
01

**JUNE 01 | SATURDAY**  
OC Riptide Masters LCM Meet
- JUN  
02

**JUNE 02 | SUNDAY**  
Pasadena Senior Games
- JUN  
13

**JUNE 13 | THURSDAY**  
SPMS Committee Conference Call
- JUN  
20

**JUNE 20 - 24 | THU - MON**  
USMS Spring Nationals (Indianapolis)

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