

EASTLANE



For the **NJ LMSC** **Annual Board Meeting** *including 2016 NJ LMSC* **Officer Elections** **Sunday November 22, 2015**

All NJ LMSC Masters Swimming members are invited and encouraged to attend the upcoming NJ LMSC Annual Board meeting, which includes the 2016 Officer elections, scheduled for Sunday, November 22nd.

The Annual Meeting will be held at 10:30am and the location is TBD. Please stay tuned for updates and additional details!

As we continue to grow our NJ LMSC volunteer group, please consider getting involved and sharing your passion for your sport. Nominations are currently being accepted for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Registrar, Sanctions & Safety Chair, Top Ten/Records Chair, and Newsletter Editor. More information and a description of the officer positions can be found on the NJ LMSC website and also on the USMS website. Please submit your nominations to Susan Kirk sqkirk@gmail.com.

Thanks and hope to see you at the meeting!

Check out some of what's inside...

New York Bight Swim — Sandy Hook to Atlantic Beach page 13

**USMS Annual Convention
Recap page 2**

**Fitness
standout**

AND MORE!

USMS Annual Convention Recap

Straight from USMS.org!

U.S. Masters Swimming has concluded its annual meeting during the United States Aquatic Sports Convention in Kansas City, Mo. In addition to committee meetings and rules and legislation reviews, USMS held officer elections and honored many of its deserving volunteers with service awards.

U.S. Masters Swimming is pleased to announce the results of elections to the Board of Directors: Patty Miller (Virginia) was elected and will serve a two-year term as president. Ed Tsuzuki (New Jersey) will continue to serve as vice president of administration. Chris Stevenson (Virginia) will continue to serve as vice president of local operations. Chris McGiffin (New Jersey) will continue to serve as vice president of programs. Frank "Skip" Thompson was elected and will serve as vice president of community services. Chris Colburn (Illinois) will continue to serve as secretary. Ralph Davis (Michigan) will serve as treasurer.



The **Capt. Ransom J. Arthur M.D. Award** is given annually to the volunteer who epitomizes the spirit of the founding father of U.S. Masters Swimming. In 1970, Dr. Arthur envisioned lifelong fitness and lifestyle benefits for adults through aquatic training and competition. Each year, the recipient of this award has demonstrated top-tier commitment and dedication to USMS's mission. The 2015 recipient is Meg Smath (Kentucky).

Each year USMS and partner Speedo honor a coach who exemplifies the highest standards in Masters coaching, including growth and development of Masters Swimming with an all-inclusive approach that welcomes swimmers of all levels and abilities. This year's **Speedo/USMS Coach of the Year** is Marty Hendrick (Florida Gold Coast) of Swim Fort Lauderdale.

Volunteers who have made significant contributions on the local, regional, and national levels and whose service stands out in scope and impact are honored with the **Dorothy Donnelly Service Award**, named for one of USMS's first super-volunteers. The 2015 recipients are: Marc Anderson (Minnesota), Harold Boscovich (Pacific), Denise Brown (Michigan), Nancy Brown (Maryland), Linda Chapman (Pacific Northwest), Ed Coates (South Texas), Suzi Green (Wisconsin), Cathy Hallman-Kenner (South Carolina), Dan Kornblatt (Niagara), Sue Nutty (Nebraska), Robin Smith (Southern Pacific), Jeff Strahota (Potomac Valley), Joanne Wainwright (North Carolina), Mark Wussler (San Diego Imperial), Susie Young (Oregon).

The USMS Coaches Committee recognizes coaches who are building our membership in commu-

nities throughout the country. The **Kerry O'Brien Coaches Award** is named to honor the Walnut Creek Masters (Pacific) coach who embodies the passion, dedication, and heart that these coaches bring to the pool deck. The 2015 recipients are: Doug Springer (Saddle Brooke Masters Swim Team), Kathy Coffin-Sheard (Grand Traverse Masters Swimming), Joel Wilson (Santa Cruz Masters), Victor Hecker (Las Vegas Masters), Rand Vaillancourt (Anne Arundel Amphibians), Dave Samuelsohn (Westchester Masters Swimming), Steve Hennessy (Fort Eustice Aquatic Center).

USMS considers club development a priority, and recognizes a club every year with the **Club of the Year Award**. Masters clubs that do the most to promote USMS's values and mission in their communities and at the national level are candidates for this award. This year's Club of the Year is Swim Fort Lauderdale (Florida Gold Coast).

The **June Krauser Communications Award** is presented annually to an individual or group whose communications efforts have contributed to USMS's growth, improvement, or success. The award is named for the author of USMS's first official rulebook and a prolific writer and editor of many early newsletters and other publications. This year's recipient is Rich Burns (Pacific).

The Championship Committee and Raleigh Area Masters select an individual each year for the **National Championship Meets Award**. The recipient of this award has made significant contributions to the success of championship-level competitions by providing excellent competitive conditions for racing at national or international meets. This year's recipient is Kim Crouch (Pacific Northwest).

The **Open Water Service Award** is a new award that debuted in 2013, to honor an individual who has made significant contributions to promoting and building excellence in USMS open water swimming by embodying the USMS mission, vision, goals, and objectives through open water swimming. This year's award recipient is Jim Wheeler (Pacific).

The USMS Fitness Committee annually presents the **USMS Fitness Award** to recognize outstanding achievement in fitness activities within USMS and is presented to individuals or organizations demonstrating outstanding contribution to fitness activities benefitting USMS members. This year's award recipient is Lisa Ward (Pacific).

Lastly, the **Ted Haartz U.S. Masters Swimming Staff Appreciation Award** recognizes one individual each year who demonstrates excellence in assisting and supporting the USMS National Office staff with its professional duties of servicing, promoting, and building the membership. The award is named in honor of a longtime leader who helped establish the foundation for USMS's evolution into a professionally operated organization. This year's recipient is Nadine Day (Indiana).



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Calendar 2015

Ongoing Events

January 1 - December 31 USMS *Go The Distance* 2015 Fitness Event. Go to <http://www.usms.org/fitness/content/gothedistance> to enter this free event.

January 1 - December 31 USMS "Check-Off Challenge" National Fitness Event Postal event designed to motivate swimmers to complete 18 "pool" events and an "open water swim" during the 2015 calendar year. [Information](#) includes online and paper entry.

Postal event 2015 Check-Off Challenge is a postal event see page 10.

Upcoming New Jersey Events

Sunday, November 22nd ~~ NJ LMSC Annual Meeting with elections 10:30am /Details to follow!

Being happy outside
the pool means fast
swimming in the pool.
~~Eric Lee Shanteau



Happy Birthday

September October Swimmers!

September Birthdays

Heather Ackerly
Dennis Almodovar
Katlyn Andrews
Christopher Argondizza
Ahmed Artis
Stephen Baker
Robert Barrish
Dana Basta
Errington Bennett
Patricia Beronio
Katie Boland
Laurie Buchanan
Lindsey Buglino
Timothy Carr
Jamie Rose Carroll
Neil Chambers
Arlene Chung-bednar
Richard Clew
Kathleen Coffey
Ameriquin Dalmasy-Laccetti
Danielle De Sanctis
Jeffrey Dietel
Theresa Dumont
Benjamin Duva
Ronald Epstein
Kristina Escalona
Greg Ewing
Ruth Falco
David Farrell
James Ferriter
Joseph Flanagan
Michael Frohman
Douglas Fulton
Robert Gamer

Bonnie Gannon
Jeffrey Gomez
Paul Grassie
Janece Guerra
William Haas
Bill Imken
Paul Jakinovich
Nancy James
David James
Jeffrey Jenkins
Louise Johns
Jennifer Johnson
Stephen Jones
Andreas Kaubisch
Joseph Kelly
Daniel Kim
Dillard Kirby
Debra Kolitz
Ron Leighton
Stanley Lozinski
Meredith Lyndon
Arland Macasieb
Gregory March
David Marsa
Maria McAuley Greer
Kelly McGrath
Fran McManus
Lynn Mellor
Carlene Messinger
Howard Miller
Damon Monterisi
Louis Murphy
Ted Nelson
Michael Nieminski
Bobbi Nigro
Sean Noonan
Flavio Pardo
Istvan Pelczer
Jim Pestrichelli
Sherri Plunkett

Don Podesta
Will Price
Daniella Racer
Chrystal Reilly
Alice Rogers
James Rokosny
Martin Rothfelder
Alain Rothstein
Dipankar Roy
Toms Royal
Jean Rutter
Anne-France Sailot
Curtis Sawin
Morgan Sawin
Jill Scafaria
Dick Schenendorf
Andrew Schleider
Scott Schmitt
Mo Siegel
Isaac Siskind
David Slutsky
Mary Elizabeth Smith
David Smith
Patricia Snyderstrup
Eugene Sollose
Joseph Stanger
Joe Steiner
Thomas Stone
Brittany Storoz
Joyce Taite
Jeff Tamburrino
Danielle Tirelli
Mary Tricano
Linda Twining
Andrea Varalli
Tom Waldron
Steven Warren
Danny Weiss

October Birthdays

Charlotte Abbott
Kenneth Abramowitz
Julian Acevedo
Katelyn Babiak
Steve Baker
John Balasic
Sam Baldwin
Michelle Barella
Kate Baumann
Jennie Blaha
Marissa Boccio
Phillip Bowden
Elizabeth Broos
Carol Buckwalter
James Burke
William Burris
Mary Burton
Richard Caiazza
Carolyn Capodicasa
Martino Caretto
Joshua Charnin-Aker
James Cho
Doug Clark
Jeff Cohen
Brian Cooper
Erika Cruz
Luke Cunningham
Thomas DiGiacomo
Diane Dinsmore
Kevin Donohue
Maureen Donohue
Andrew Eason
Dan Fabrizio
Kristopher Farreny
Brian Fennell
Alfred Ferguson
Sandra Franc
Nancy Freundlich
Jane Gardner
Gregory Geissman
Roberta Geist

Jennifer Geronimo
Pat Gilligan
Neil Glass
Steve Glassman
Brian Glenn
Honey Gross
Edward Harvey
Robert Henry
Karen Hilliard-Johnson
Bridgette Hobart
Georgina Huston
Gabrielle Johnston
Eyad Karadsheh
John Kehoe
Paul Kiell
Amy Kolman
Eric Kramer
Katherine Kusterer
Jessica Lester
Jose Lopez
Xiaotian Lu
Stephen Madden
Beth Maloney
Catherine Maloney Falcon
Robert McAdams
Patrick McCullough
Vincent McVeigh
Debbie Meany
Yuri Mekhanik
Ann Monaghan
Lisa Moran
Adele Morgan
Carol Morman
Jay Muldoon

Katie Mulligan
Anne Murphy
David Nash
Gloria O'Connell
Katy O'Hara
Deirdre Omara
John Palmer
Kelly Pickard
Nicholas Pizzurro
Julie Porro
Paula Pycrc
Matt Reisenweber
Lisa Rivera
Paul Rodgers
Gerald Rommel
Mike Rossner
Thomas Rowe
Gita Roy
Joseph Ruberto
Richard Rubin
William Ruthrauff
Terrell Salley-Holliman
Alan Sawyer
Patrick Scanlon
Lawrence Seidman
Celine Seltzer
Lisa Serieyssol
Brian Sieger
Joel Stein
Samuel Stein
Julie Stewart
Jonathan Stone
Mieko Takenaka
Megan Tompkins
Geetha Venkataswamy
Anthony Viillanueva
Chuck Warner
Lucinda Warren
Sharlene Weaver
Adam Wernersbach
John Williamson
Joseph Wines
Martin Winters
Thomas Yakowenko
Allison Zelnick



Kudos Kudos Kudos!!

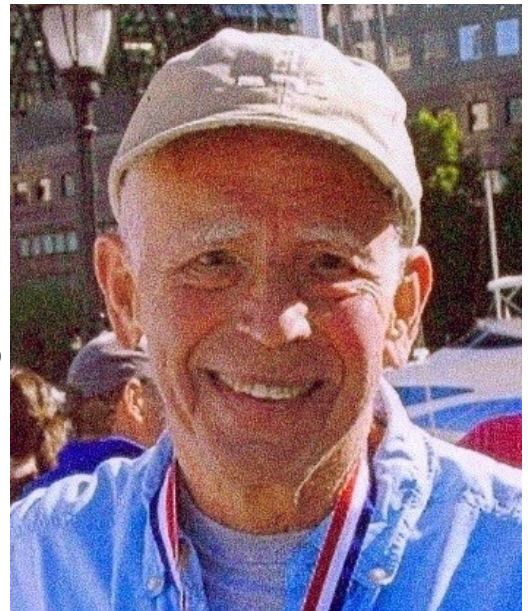
Congratulations to the following NJ LMSC swimmers who set new NJ LMSC SCY records at the New Jersey Senior Olympics at the Woodbridge Recreation Center in Woodbridge, NJ on September 12-13, 2015. **Women 80-84:** Janet Moeller (80) 50 breast - 1:00.12, 100 breast - 2:22.32, 200 breast - 5:06.40; **Women 85-89:** Rosemarie Froeder (85) 100 back - 2:46.71, 200 back - 6:02.50; **Men 60-64:** Ken Niemi (60) 200 back - 2:31.68; **Men 85-89:** Nickolas Demas (85) 50 free - 36.72, 100 free - 1:28.25

Record-setting Swim!



Paul Kiell, a retired psychiatrist from Basking Ridge, NJ set a NJ Masters Swimming record for the 85-89 year old 1000 yard freestyle swim in the Adult Mini Swim meet at the Sussex County YMCA today. Paul's time of 19:07.18 broke Austin Newman's record of 20:28.20 set in 2004

Paul is an accomplished masters runner and open water swimmer as well as a pool swimmer. His open water swims include a solo Alcatraz to San Francisco swim and relays swims around Manhattan and across Tampa Bay. He is also author of several books on exercise and well being. Paul currently holds other NJ Masters 25 yard pool records including the 80-84 age group records for the 1650 yard freestyle and the 75-79 record for the 500 and 1650 yard freestyles.



METERS FOR MIKE

On the morning of September 19, 2015 over 650 swimmers from ages 11-75 gathered on the foggy beaches in Belmar, New Jersey to race in memory of a fellow swimmer who most had never met. This collection of swimmers from YMCAs, club teams, masters programs and universities from around the tri-state area competed in the largest open water swim event in New Jersey of the calendar year known as Meters for Mike. Since the initial race in 2012, Meters for Mike has grown each year, attracting swimmers of all abilities to initially raise funds for their fellow swimmer in his battle to overcome a traumatic brain injury and more recently to help those who find themselves in a similar situation.

Michael Heaney, a native to New Jersey, swam at Camden County YMCA and Bishop Eustace through high school, then went on to captain The College of New Jersey Men's team until his graduation in 2009. In the spring of 2012, Michael was involved in an accident that left him with a traumatic brain injury. In an effort to support Michael's mounting medical bills, a group of former teammates rallied in his name to organize the initial Meters for Mike race in September 2012. Based on the success of this race, the event has turned into an annual gathering of the tri-state swimming community to compete and raise funds in Michael's name who had succumb to his injuries in the fall of 2013.

The race on September 19, 2015 certainly did not disappoint, with a record setting crowd competing and cheering. The thick, soupy fog that delayed the race did not impact the enthusiasm of the participants, even though this involved a course rearrangement by the Belmar Water Rescue and lifeguards. The patience of the racers and their cheering sections was truly a testament of their commitment and passion for the event.

Meters for Mike was started to support a fellow swimmer, however, the tremendous outpouring of support from the swimming community has turned this event into something truly indescribable. The team and age group awards allow for a few to be recognized for their individual accomplishments but in the grand scheme, this event illustrates the power and unity of the swimming community to rally in an honor of one of its own. Michael Heaney's spirit is captured by each smiling face that enters the water to race and each cheer that is yelled from the beach.

The event will continue to support those suffering from traumatic brain injuries and hopes to create scholarships in the near future. But none of this would be possible without the participants from every ability and skill level of the swimming community who selflessly donate and compete each year.

The race is tentatively set for September 17, 2016 in hopes of attracting a new record crowd. The Meters for Mike team can be reached at metersformike@gmail.com and information is available at metersformike.com. All tax deductible donations can be sent to the "Michael Heaney Fund Inc", PO Box 8010 Bridgewater, NJ 08807.

Fall into a new workout!

Thanks Julie Schoenlank, Coaches Chair!

Warm up:

400 Free

200 Kick choice

200 Pull (breathe every 5 strokes)

200 Reverse IM (50drill/50swim)

Main Set:

4x (10x50) #1,3 free, #2,4 pull

5x100 IM #1,3,5 swim, #2,4 kick

20 x 25 as follows:

1-5 free

6-10 breast

11-15 back

16-20 fly

Cool Down:

300 choice

Total: 4,300



Fitness Standout—Ben Zhou

It's all the coaches' making

From “dry land duck” to competitive swimming

At an age that put me in the “senior” category, I participated for the first time, in the 2015 NJ Senior Olympic Games’ swimming competition held in Woodbridge on Sunday, September 13th. I got three 1st places in all the races I swam in the 50-54 age group: 200-yd free, 100-yd back and breaststroke.

I never thought I could be a serious swimmer until February 15th 2015 when for the first time in my life and at 54, I participated in a U.S. Masters competitive swimming event, the OCY Unofficial Masters Team Championship Meet, and even got a few medals. In hindsight, I realized it's all the coaches' making.

My parents and siblings used to call me “dry land duck” as I would scream out of fear when my older siblings – three of them, tried to get me into water at our summer outings. It seems all siblings have the tendency once in a while to conspire to do something crazy to their little brothers. When I did get into chest deep water, a variation at the bottom would trigger intense fear. I was especially afraid of those ghostly long, and shadowy water weeds which, I was told, might entangle around my legs and draw me to the bottom. So I always let my father wrap an inflated bicycle tire tube around my chest before I waded into water. Eventually at 14, I was able to keep my head above water.

In adulthood, I became an endurance runner. In competitions, I would run 5000, 3000, 1500, and 800 meters in a single event and got good medals. However, in my late 40s, after injuring my knee from running and later getting badly hurt in a cycling accident where the memory of the trauma left me unable to get back to the road, I turned to swimming.

By then I was already over 50, and my swimming style was ugly at best -- blasting water and fighting to catch my breath. After observing others, I was able to do the most basic freestyle, and gave myself a goal of 2km, three times a week. But I was painfully slow.

In November 2014, considering myself an OK swimmer, I signed up in an adult swimming class in the Cranford pool and joined USMS. To my disbelief, the coaches pointed out that virtually everything I did was wrong. But I was eager to learn from anyone who offered tips to help me improve. Videos and articles in the USMS website's videos turned out to be quite helpful in identifying areas that needed attention. Our coaches seemed to like my attitude and recognized some potential in me, so they coached me rigorously. Most of drills were brutal for me at the beginning. But little by little, I made progress. Eventually, Coach Jeff commented, “Ben swims like a machine” – an encouraging feedback to my improving endurance in the pool.

At a swimmers' party in January, Sally, one of our four coaches, casually said she believed I should sign up for the upcoming USMS swimming event at OCY on 2/15. Although I felt far from being nearly good enough to compete, her quiet demeanor somehow inspired me to register for the event, and I signed up for all five freestyle races: 1000, 500, 200, 100, and 50-yard. A fellow swimmer remarked that doing all five was “a little” crazy.

But the event was fun. Despite the fact that I couldn't dive start but did anyway with a splash, and felt embarrassed for making open-turns while the rest did beautiful dolphin-like turns, out of the five races I got three medals in my age group. I earned a silver for 1,000, bronze for 500 and 200, and contributed to our small team's 3rd overall place in the event.



These achievements in my first ever competitive meet made me feel proud, boosted my confidence tremendously, and kept me practicing with discipline.

Fitness Stand Out Continued

Coach Beth joked, "Ben, now you're hooked". Yes, it was our four extraordinary coaches: Sally Kleeman, Jeff Jotz, Beth Maloney, and Bill Reichle, who recognized my potential and guided me into the right path. Every single time a coach points out something, sometimes major, sometimes minor; it always brings me immediate and noticeable improvement and seeing these improvements keeps me motivated.

Before I even noticed, swimming has become an inseparable part of my life. By this December, I am on pace to have swum for the year more than the highway distance between Boston and Princeton!

A "Newbie" Goes to the US Aquatics Sports Convention

Earlier this month I was lucky enough to be a delegate to the 36th Annual US Aquatic Sports Convention held in Kansas City! The day before the Convention I took a class to be certified as a US Masters Adult Learn to Swim instructor. This was half day of classroom work, half day pool work.

WOW is the first word that comes to mind when I reflect on my experience. What a thrill to be surrounded by so many people who share the love of swimming and everything water. Everywhere you turn, there is a swimmer. I met fellow swimmers from as far away as California to as close as New York. Making friends was very easy as we already had a topic for conversation!

HECTIC, but good hectic is the second word that comes to mind. My days started early — I went to the dryland workouts each morning at 6am, led by different swim coaches each day. This was a great way to meet and talk to other delegates and learn about dryland exercises. By 8am we were in meetings — either Delegates meetings (where official business took place), workshops or committee-specific meetings. My favorite workshop was the media workshop. This was eye-opening as I learned lots of information and USMS resources that can assist me in being Editor to this newsletter.

And of course there was lots of FUN! As a new Delegate I was invited to a New Delegate pizza lunch. This was one of my favorite events as I was able to casually meet fellow newbies and have a good lunch to boot!

Some of the goodies I got from the convention...note the "Help me I'm new" on my badge!



2nd Annual Last Chance Swim Rocked

Gorgeous weather prevailed on September 5th, the Saturday of Labor Day weekend, for the 2nd Annual End of the Summer 5K LCM Pool Swim at the Cranford Pool & Fitness Center. Thirty five swimmers swam a snappy 5,000 meters with most of the group choosing the 50 X 100's and a few opting for the 100 X 50's. Special thanks goes to Bill Reichle for all his efforts (especially organizing the lanes), and also to Sally Kleeman, Maria McCoy, Nancy Goering, and Patti Bell for their wonderful volunteer help. After the swim, participants refueled with refreshments and got a chance to chat at this lovely facility.



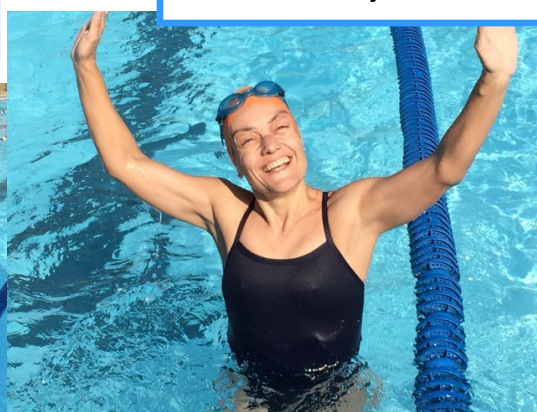
Bill Reichle (on deck), Ann McKay Thoroman, Michael Recchia and Christian Kroyer are all done!



L - r Dave Feldman, Kim Plewa, Jen Baumann, Ashley Pertsemelidis and Chris Chang



The crowded fast lane! From l - r starting with the front row: Ken Niemi, Jeff Jotz, Bill Sullivan, 2nd row: Julie Porro, Ron Epstein, Jens Volker, Rich Clew 3rd row: Dave Farrell, Sandy Bluhm, Bill Fallon, last row: Eric Marquard.



Mary Konsolaki is ready for more!



Lan Ge looking radiant after the swim!

Thanks Nancy Goering. And Linda Brown-Kuhn for the terrific photos!

This Past Summer Patricia Sener became the first person to swim across the NY Bight. Her mission? Protecting our backyard ocean.

New York Bight Swim — Sandy Hook, NJ to Atlantic Beach LI

July 22 — 17 miles — Time: 11:05:35

Traveling along in the support boat were some close friends-- her navigator Rondi Davies observer Lori King and crew Alan Morrison, as well as her nephew Lukas Wolf, who documented the trip and sent updates to both the news and social media. Margrethe Hørlyck-Romanovsky kayaked next to her, giving her feeds, guidance, and moral support.



Photo by Lukas Wolf

Here's Patricia's recount:

In August of 2014, I stood on the bow of the American Princess, on a trip with Gotham Whale, and was amazed to watch an incredible array of marine life that resided in the NY Bight. It was there, watching the humpback whales play within sight of the Empire State Building, that I realized two things. One, that we had the English Channel in our own backyard and I wanted to swim it, and two, knowing this was formerly NYC's dumping grounds, that in a very short time an amazing rebound of marine life was happening in our backyard ocean.

My dream came to fruition on July 22nd, when I swam an unprecedented 17 miles across the Western NY Bight to bring attention to the Clean Ocean Zone Initiative, which seeks to create the first-ever federally protected Clean Ocean Zone, or COZ. This COZ would be the nation's first-ever pollution-free ocean area where pollution sources such as raw sewage and oil/gas industries would be prohibited. CIBBOWS, of which I am the Executive Director, partnered with Clean Ocean Action, the creator of this initiative, in order to bring attention to the importance of keeping our local ocean clean and wild. Close to \$3,000 was raised through CIBBOWS for to two charities—Clean Ocean Action and Gotham Whale. The swim started in North Point Beach, Sandy Hook, NJ, and finished on Atlantic Beach, LI, near the site of a proposed liquefied natural gas storage facility that threatens to bring pollution to our waterways.

We met our boat captain in Gerriston Beach. He was an old salt of the sea with strong ideas. My navigator Rondi and I had been looking at tidal charts for about 9 months when she found this exceptional tide for me. She is much more soft-spoken and diplomatic than I, and I left negoti-

ating the course in her capable hands. My crew was A-team comprised of elite marathon swimmers, each bringing special talents to the table. Rondi was a scientist, with a deep curiosity for studying tidal charts and sharp attention to detail. Alan was in charge of my feeds and my pace swimmer, and was also the person I go to when I need to be talked off the ledge. He is unfailingly kind and caring, and the best at smoothing over rough waters. Lori King, my observer, had just completed 120 miles down the Hudson. Keeper of my secrets, unfailingly in my corner, she was charged with recording the data for my swim. Lukas, my lovely nephew, was new to the sport, but as someone passionate about filmmaking, I knew his storytelling abilities, eye, and good energy would be perfect voice for my journey. And finally Margrethe, my kayaker, my lifeline, the strong woman who would lead me to the other side, who's grace and good nature would warm my dark moments.

My captain was amused to learn we needed to find North Point beach specifically for the start, because I was planning a press conference in conjunction with Clean Ocean Action. Cindy Zipf, my new sister in ocean conservation, was waiting for me with her outreach coordinator Nicole. She had worked her magic, and soon enough we found a shady spot and reporters surrounded me. We both were invested in spreading the message about the wondrous waters of the NY Bight, how they were in danger, and how we all needed to stand up and make our voice heard in the name of ocean conservation.

I lumbered to the shoreline, peeling away from a cheering crowd, relieved to join Margrethe and begin my journey. As I dove underwater, I felt back at home. I imagined a collective cheer from all the marine animals without a voice. I felt smooth, strong, and all warrior.

I had my first feed and very soon we were approaching Sandy Hook Channel. Margrethe got my attention and gently said, "Can you pick it up a little? There's a tanker coming" ...and I quickly picked up my pace.

Soon I could taste the menhaden in the water. Then the distinctive taste of half-eaten bait-fish. I popped my head out of the water and asked the captain what was around me. He said "we are in whale country!" and soon I saw the USCG vessel peel off to check out something off the other side of the bow, and the crew looking too. A humpback whale spotted about 400 yards away; various crewmembers saw the humpback breach, and saw the fluke and the spout.

Soon we were at the Ambrose, my crew consulting with the Coast Guard. It took me a minute to comprehend the situation—a tug was pulling a huge barge. I would have to wait for the whole operation to pass, so I asked for a sandwich and treaded impatiently until I got the green light to go. Alan jumped in alongside. It was big rollers by this point; the wind had whipped up the waves. Soon we fell into a comfortable pace, and at the next feed he headed back into the boat. The water was clear and a deep green, unlike anywhere I've swam in NY. Lori too got in, but she is much faster than I, and while I picked up my pace considerably to try to match her, she became too cold swimming my speed and I told her to get out.

As the sun began to slide down the horizon we started making our way towards shore. The swim was supposed to take me 7 hours. I recognized the Gill Hodges Bridge, why was I seeing that? I should be well past it. I kept asking the time, the pain in my right shoulder gone from nagging to blinding. When it reached 6pm—the time I was supposed to be finished—I asked my crew how much further. "Just three more miles!" Just a loop! Ok, I can do a loop. I soldiered on, pretending I was headed towards the pier, and then back. Two feeds. Towards the white building, and back. More feeds—I was stopping a little more frequently now. When I had completed the loop, the boat came over. It was Alan with my night-light. My heart sank. I would be swimming into the night.

After some adjustments, eventually I figured out that if I breathed only to my right I could avoid the searing pain in my shoulder and keep a steady rhythm. My left arm did all the work and I picked up my kick to help keep the pace. I made peace with the fact I would be swimming into the dark, let go of the idea of finishing, and just swam. I swam. It's what I do. I swam until night fell and it was only the pale moon and the light from the back of the kayak, the phosphorescence underneath from my pull. I was in that state of grace that all marathon swimmers seek—that feeling of being completely present in the universe. Cold, my body was not attached to the idea of being cold, and aware that I slipping ever closer to hypothermia, nothing mattered but to keep swimming. I was at peace, and swam into the beautiful inky night.

Eventually a wave hit me on the back of my head. I was confused, until my kayaker gently told me “Patricia, we are at the beach. Stand up.” It was black, but I could make out the silhouette of Alan standing on the shore. I struggled out of the break to his warm congratulatory hug on the dark beach; a flock of startled birds taking wing, white bellies against obsidian sky.

It was exciting to see this swim come to fruition exactly the way I had envisioned--supported by wonderful people in my community, reaching out to like-minded partners in order to raise awareness of the need for strong marine conservation policies, and finishing the longest swim I've ever done to date, and being the first to cross the NY Bight. The news media was really wonderful, they became very invested in following my story, calling up my nephew and Cindy Zipf, the Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action to find out if I had made it. Many did follow up stories. I plan on developing this swim with CIBBOWS so that more people can experience the NY Bight and get invested in protecting this amazing place.

**Want to learn more about
keeping the ocean clean?
Check out these sites...**



www.cleanoceanaction.org



www.gothamwhale.com