

PACIFIC NORTHWEST  
ASSOCIATION OF  
MASTERS SWIMMERS

U.S. MASTERS  
SWIMMING IN  
WESTERN  
WASHINGTON

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# The WetSet

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## President's Message

*By Sally Dillon, PNA President*

Congratulations to Diana Hermanson and Brian Woodbury, PNA annual award recipients!

**Diana, Head Coach of Bernardo's All-Stars**, received the PNA Coach of the Year Award while **Brian, a Lake Washington Masters member**, received the Dawn Musselman **Inspirational Swimmer Award**. You'll find more details and photos on pages 2 & 3 of this newsletter.

PNA's annual awards were presented at its April 13 Annual Meeting/Social/Awards event following Saturday's competition at the SCY Championship meet. The event was held in the banquet hall that is adjacent to the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center.



Mark your calendars for the upcoming LCM summer meet on July 6 and 7. This year it will be a two-day event for the first time and will take place at the wonderful Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center in Federal Way. (Meet info is included in this newsletter.)

The meet is hosted by PNA rather than a specific club and volunteers are needed from **PNA's clubs and workout groups**. **Bainbridge Aquatic Masters has again committed** to provide hospitality for the officials, timers, and coaches. How can your club or workout group contribute? There are lots of ways: be an official or the announcer, help at the clerk of course, hand out awards, fill timer's chairs, serve as Safety Marshals to enforce USMS rules, and more! I hope you will discuss this with your coaches and teammates and let me **know what you'd like to do to contribute!** Much of the meet profit will be donated to the clubs and workout groups who pitch in. Email me at [salswmr@comcast.net](mailto:salswmr@comcast.net) to volunteer. I hope to hear from you!



Follow PNA on  
Facebook!

# PNA Coach of the Year!

By Sally Dillon, PNA President

**Congratulations to Bernardo's All-Stars coach Diana Hermanson – PNA's 2024 Coach of the Year honoree!**

After serving as an assistant coach for many years, Diana stepped into the head coaching job after the tragic death of BERN's founder, Chad Hagedorn. She brought not only a lifetime of swimming experience but also an unmatched "level of care" to her grieving team.

**Bernardo's All-Stars** has flourished as Diana has developed new training programs for swimmers of all levels. She has improved the fitness and performance of the team and started a new open water program that has become very popular. Her team members consider her to be one of the most dedicated and passionate coaches they've met.

Diana shows a willingness to share her coaching skills and information with others and has mentored many young coaches. She has influenced the greater PNA community by serving as a coach for Puget Sound Masters at the 2023 Spring Nationals.



*Diana Hermanson  
with award*

## Swim Calendar

[Search USMS  
Calendar of Events](#)

May 15-Sep 15: [USMS 5K/10K Virtual Champs](#)

May 18: [COMA LCM Meet](#), Bend, OR

May 19: [Lake Juniper Open Water Buoy Swim](#), Bend, OR

June 1: [Whidbey Island Adventure Swim](#), Langley

June 15: [Clackamas Cove Cruise Open Water Swim](#), Oregon City, OR

June 20-24: [USMS Spring Nationals](#), Indianapolis, IN

June 29: [PNW Zone Open Water Championship](#), Boise, ID

July 6-7: LCM meet, Federal Way

July 12-21: [Pan-American Masters Games](#), Cleveland, OH

July 27: [Fat Salmon Open Water Swim](#), Seattle

July 28: [WA Senior Games](#), Olympia

Aug 11: [Swim Defiance](#), Tacoma

Aug 18: [OR Senior Games](#), Corvallis, OR

Aug 21-25: [USMS Summer Nationals](#), Mission Viejo, CA

Sep 15-Nov 15: [USMS 3000/6000 Virtual Champs](#)

Oct 25-27: [1st Annual National Invitational Pentathlon](#), Bend, OR

Nov 1-10: [Pan Pacific Masters Games](#), Gold Coast, Australia

# Dawn Musselman Inspirational Swimmer

By Steve Peterson, PNA Board Member

It was my pleasure at this year's Annual Meeting and Social following Saturday's Champs events at KCAC to present one of PNA's two annual awards. We honor the memory of Dawn Musselman (1913-1986) with the *Dawn Musselman Inspirational Swimmer Award*, given annually since 1986. Dawn, a 1932 Olympics hopeful, inspired other PNA swimmers, always encouraging them to do their best. Read Dawn's fascinating story on pages 4-5 of the [July 1976 issue of \*The WetSet\*](#). Also [Dan Levin's 1978 \*Sports Illustrated\*](#) article about Dawn!

Brian Woodbury was selected as our Inspirational Swimmer for 2024. I presented Brian with an individual trophy and a framed copy of the presentation, summarized below. The perpetual trophy with Brian's name as the 39th entry will be placed with his team for the coming year.

Brian, you are an inspiration to the Lake Washington Masters and to all of PNA. Teammate and nominator Lily Li wrote, "Brian's dedication and passion for swimming are truly remarkable. His last summer workout, the Mercer Island Loop, showcased his outstanding skills and determination.

"Brian's commitment to excellence in swimming is evident in every stroke he takes. He not only pushes himself to new heights but also inspires others around him to strive for greatness. His journey in swimming, as documented on his website is a testament to his unwavering dedication and love for the sport.

"I believe Brian exemplifies the spirit of the Inspirational Swimmer Award and is truly deserving of this recognition. His achievements and positive impact on the swimming community make him an outstanding candidate."

Teammate Linda Chapman added, "Brian is super enthusiastic, kind to all, and a positive presence at practice."

Brian, for your inspiration to the entire membership of the Pacific Northwest Association of Masters Swimmers by your example of good sportsmanship, encouragement, and commitment, PNA is proud to recognize you as our Dawn Musselman Inspirational Swimmer for 2024.



Brian Woodbury accepts his award from PNA Board Member Steve Peterson

## LCM Summer Meet

PNA is hosting an LCM Summer Meet on Saturday & Sunday, July 6 & 7 at Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center in Federal Way. Warmups start at 9 am; meet starts at 10 am.

More complete meet information can be found on page 28 of this newsletter. A two-day affair, it will include the 1500 meter free for the first time. Please contact Meet Director Sally Dillon at [salswmr@comcast.net](mailto:salswmr@comcast.net) to volunteer.

# PNA Champs & Annual Social

The 2024 PNA Championship Meet (AKA PNA Champs) was held April 13-14 at the Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center in Federal Way. The event, hosted by Blue Wave Aquatics, featured 274 swimmers registered for 1086 individual events and combining for 74 relay teams. It was a weekend filled with friendly competition and remarkable performances.

Several swimmers clinched a perfect score of 54 points by winning all six of their individual events, including Abigail Motley (CSCM, 30-34), Svetlana Karpeeva (LWM, 35-39), Baden Sprinkle (BWAQ, 35-39), Kurt Grote (OREG, 50-54), Christine McClafferty (OREG 50-54), Scot Sullivan (OREG, 55-59), Wendy Hoffman (MICC, 60-64), Rick Colella (LWM, 70-74), Janet Gettling (OREG, 75-79), Andrea Hunt (BAMWA, 75-79), and Joy Ward (OREG 80-84).

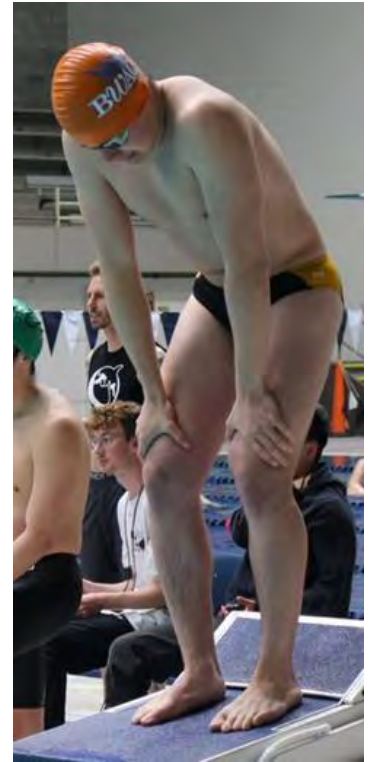
Teams were divided into large, medium, and small divisions for scoring. Lake Washington Masters claimed the top spot in the **large division with 1030 points, followed by Bernardo's All Stars (829 points) and Blue Wave Aquatics (774)**. Cascade Masters led the medium division with 676 points, followed by Bainbridge Aquatic Masters (407 points) and Team Walker international Masters (345). Western Washington University topped the small division with 191 points, edging out Husky Masters (167 points) and Thunderbird Aquatic Club Masters (138).

The championship weekend included the "PNA Social, Award Presentation, and Annual Membership Meeting," providing an opportunity for swimmers to celebrate and unwind after **Saturday's events**. **Winners of the annual Dawn Musselman Inspirational Swimmer and Coach of the Year Awards** were announced at the event.



2024 PNA Championships				2024 PNA Championships			
Event:001	Heat:1	Mixed 1000y Free	14:39.24	Event:001	Heat:2	Mixed 1000y Free	13:27.9
1	Kimball, Hugh	NEO		1	Underbrink, Dan	TWIM	
2	Milman, Ariana	BERN		2	Andelin, Travis	CSCM	47.58 13:27.23 4
3	Condotta, Robert	BWAQ		3	Hartney, Maureen	LWM	42.11 13:19.10 2
4	Hunt, Andrea	BAMW	51.66 14:55.94 7	4	Barnes, Brent	TWIM	
5	Barclay, Rebecca	LWM	47.22 14:43.25 2	5	Gonzalez, George	ORCA	
6	Vickery, Danae	SNOG		6	Joslin, Nora	WMUS	43.32 13:27.00 3
7	Weyhrauch, Tom	BERN	53.20 14:48.54 6	7	Rittenhouse, J	BERN	43.50 13:27.23 4
8	Daniels, Avery	SAM	42.79 14:39.24 1	8	Watts, David	WISC	

# PNA Champs & Annual Social (cont)



# March Madness

The 2024 TACM March Madness meet was held March 10 at the Fidalgo Pool and Fitness Center in Anacortes, WA.

After several years as an SCM meet, the 77 registered swimmers mounted starting blocks in the SCY direction **to get “back in sync” with SCY season. Back when the meet was earlier in January or February, it had been switched to SCM so swimmers could swim meters times that counted regardless of when birthdays fell (since for meters meets everyone ages up on January 1). The switch to daylight saving time didn’t seem to faze anyone either, and after some last-minute heat sheet adjustments, swimmers experienced an efficient and enjoyable competition.**

Top finishers included Wendy Hoffman (60-64), Nolan Jenks (18-24), Lindsey Jennings (40-44), Chantal Lauzon (50-54), Dick Peterson (85-89), George Ramsay (25-29), and Emily Yasukochi (45-49), who each won five or more events.

Meet Director Jenny Claridge marshaled her staff of Thunderbird Aquatic Club Masters volunteers through the 18 events, which started just after 10 am and finished as predicted around 1:30 pm. The officiating staff included Heather Brennan (referee), Jeri Rimat (starter), and Dick Chapman, Nancy Chen, and Steve Ciatti (stroke & turn). Our thanks to all these officials and volunteers who give their time so that we may compete!

For a firsthand account of the event, read [this TWIM Blog post](#).



*Thunderbird Aquatic Club Masters*



## Oregon City “Spring Ahead”

The “Spring Ahead” meet is a two-day SCM event hosted annually by the Oregon City Tankers at the Municipal Swimming Pool in Oregon City. Five Puget Sound Masters swimmers were among the 108 swimmers registered for the March 9-10 event: TWIM members Brent Barnes, Holly Lickwala, and Dave Scott along with the father/daughter duo of Adrian and Caley Haydu.

The Haydus were able to swim side-by-side in many of their events including the 100 Backstroke where daughter Caley finished only a fraction of a second ahead of her dad. “They were both really stoked about racing and were having a great time at the meet,” noted Dave Scott in his [TWIM Blog post](#). Caley (18-24) won all six of her events while Adrian (45-49) won four events.

Barnes (55-59) took first in the 200 and 400 Free and earned a personal best in the 100 Free. Lickwala (45-49) won the 100 IM and the 200 Free, the latter in a new personal best time. Scott (55-59), who only competed on the first day, took first in the 200 Breast.

## PSM Spring Announcements



Annual Meeting: The Puget Sound Masters Board is holding its annual meeting May 21 at 7 pm and you’re invited! During this time, we’ll be moving to adopt proposed changes to the PSM bylaws. If you’d like to attend this virtual event, email [pugetsoundmasters@gmail.com](mailto:pugetsoundmasters@gmail.com), and we’ll get you the Zoom link.

Get your swag on! PSM hoodies and shirts are now available online! Head over to [www.twallawalla.com/psm](http://www.twallawalla.com/psm) to check out the options. If you’re going to nationals, you’ll want to represent your team in style!

Spring Nationals: The deadline for Spring Nationals in Indianapolis is May 28. If you plan to sign up, please reach out to Coach Diana Hermanson via Facebook or [bernardoallstars.org](http://bernardoallstars.org) to help her plan for relays and staffing needs.

# 7EM

## FOCUSED ACTIVITIES TO IMPROVE YOUR FRONT CRAWL (FREESTYLE)

Video with encouragement and **step-by-step** instructions for ALL levels by **Guila Muir**, Founder of Say Yes to Life Swims

*“Guila has an amazing ability to say just the right thing to take my swimming to the next level.”*

MATT L, 2023

Learn HOW and WHY to “swim from the inside out”

SAY  
YES  
to  
LIFE  
SWIMS



## TWIM Clinic

Team Walker International Masters presented a Stroke Development and Improvement Clinic headed by USMS Coach Bill Brenner on Saturday, March 9 at Snohomish Aquatic Center. With a focus on refining techniques across all competitive strokes, this clinic brought together coaches and swimmers for a day of learning and camaraderie.

The success of this clinic was made possible by the outstanding support of PNA regional coaches, including April Cheadle (Bainbridge Aquatic Masters), Wade Praeger (Lake Washington Masters), Amy Heape (Amy Heape's Open Water Coaching), Wendy Neely (Blue Wave Aquatics), Tonya Heike (Snohomish Aquatic Masters) and Diana Hermanson and Serrell Collins (Bernardo's All Stars). These On-Deck Coaches played a pivotal role in ensuring that each participant received personalized attention and feedback, contributing significantly to the event's effectiveness.

Attendee Tom Weyhrauch (Bernardo's All-Stars) shared his enthusiasm for the clinic in a [letter to the TWIM Booster Club](#). He commended Coach Brenner's skillful instruction and the dedication of the regional coaches, emphasizing the value of their collective effort in fostering a supportive learning environment. "Climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro or teaching me the butterfly stroke. Which is more difficult?" he joked.

Steve Schwartz, another participant, provided a detailed summary of the clinic's agenda and activities in a [post on the TWIM Blog](#). From freestyle to butterfly, Coach Brenner guided swimmers through focused drills aimed at improving various aspects of their strokes. With easy-to-understand progressions and expert insights, participants left the clinic equipped with newfound knowledge and confidence in their abilities.

As the clinic drew to a close, participants expressed their gratitude to Coach Brenner and TWIM for the invaluable opportunity to enhance their swimming skills. Positive feedback underscored the importance of continued education within the Masters Swimming community. The TWIM organization also noted "a huge thanks" to major sponsors Michael's Toyota of Bellevue and PNA for their contributions in making this event a reality.

Mark your calendars for the next TWIM clinic on May 25th so you don't miss the chance to elevate your speed and technique under the guidance of legendary Brazilian Olympian Tatiana Lemos de Lima. Visit [TWIM's website](#) for more information and registration details. TWIM looks forward to welcoming swimmers of all levels!

## USMS 5K Virtual Championship

Federal Way's Aquatic Center has been reserved for two hours on Sunday, July 7 to allow PNA swimmers to participate in this year's USMS 5K Virtual Championship event.

The 5K swim will begin shortly after the conclusion of the LCM Summer Meet. An estimated start time will be established after the meet entry deadline, and no later than July 3.

Important Details:

- 16-person limit – two swimmers per lane
- \$25 fee to help defray the lane rental cost. Bring cash or check (payable to PNA)
- Official application and USMS liability waiver are required
- Proof of USMS registration in the event is required
- Contact Sally Dillon at [salswmr@comcast.net](mailto:salswmr@comcast.net) to receive the application form



# SPRINT CLINIC



## With Tatiana!

Only \$90!!

## MASTERS SWIMMERS - WANT TO GET FASTER??

### *Tatiana Lemos de Lima*

Legendary 2-time Brazilian Olympian, former International star, and current Head Senior Coach from Wave Aquatics. An elite freestyler, Tatiana knows the secrets to speed.


### *Clinic Details*


First of a two-clinic series, session 1 focuses on Long Axis strokes: Freestyle and Backstroke. Learn the fundamentals of high performance swimming -- swim FAST!!

### *Registration Info*

Saturday, May 25 2024  
Check in 11-11:15am  
Clinic 11:45am-1:30pm  
Equipment: suit, goggles, fins (strongly recommended) & a towel

**BOOK NOW**

 [Snohomish Aquatic Center](#)

 [www.twimteam.org](http://www.twimteam.org)



# World Aquatics Masters Championships

*Adapted from Steve Fogg's*

*[TWIM Blog article](#)*

Last autumn, my former PSM teammate Dan Phillips suggested I consider participating in the World Aquatics Masters Championships (WAMC) in Doha, Qatar. After some deliberation throughout the fall, I made the decision to go and began organizing my trip and selecting events. As my February 19 departure date approached, I felt some uncertainty due to unfamiliar perceptions of that region. However, my online research about Qatar, particularly Doha, proved to be informative and reassuring.

The journey to Doha took me through Frankfurt, Germany, with an interesting Qatar Air flight tracing the Danube River, passing the Black Sea, skirting east of Istanbul, west of Baghdad, east of Kuwait City and finally southeast to Doha. Arriving at 11:30 PM, I found Doha's airport to be a large and bustling hub. After a prolonged hike to Baggage Claim and navigating through customs and immigration, I embarked on the challenge of getting to my hotel, eventually arriving around 1:00 AM local time. Doha really loves their night lights – most of the light poles were decorated with multiple-colored lights.

The first day in Qatar was a learning experience as I navigated from Old Town to the Aspire Dome Complex. Despite getting lost a few times, the availability of English speakers helped get me back on track. The Underground had instructions in both English and Arabic, and at the Sports City Metro stop a person directed me where to pick up my WAMC credentials.



The Complex is massive, featuring two indoor 50-meter pools, a Water Polo facility, and an outdoor 50-meter pool. Also, a World Cup Soccer stadium, various buildings, open spaces, and even a mall with a Venice-like canal system and hockey rink. I explored the indoor and outdoor pools, among other facilities.

That evening, I took a stroll to the Old Town Waterfront, though made a wrong turn ending up in the Dhow Harbor looking for the Open Water venue. I found it the following morning while walking through the picturesque Mina District with its many-colored buildings. As I explored further, I painfully realized I had been walking too much, also learning that the passing horn honkers were for-hire cars trying to get my business.

**When Dan Phillips arrived, we got his credentials and did more exploring. (I didn't accompany Dan to the open water venue, 3.2 km each way.)** At breakfast, we met two Australian open water swimmers, including Cyril Baldock (80-84), a local and international legend who once held the fastest English Channel crossing record for the 70-74 age group. He also has a local beach named after him. Dan and I enjoyed their camaraderie. **On the Men's Open Water Day, I did a training swim at the Aspire Dome and then taxied to the venue to watch Dan swim his wave. I have to say that I don't regret not signing up for that!**

*(Continued on page 11)*

## World Aquatics Masters Championships (cont)

*(Continued from page 10)*

The transition to pool competition marked my turn to swim, though not until day 3. Surprisingly, I performed well despite not swimming in a 50-meter pool since last August. I was thrilled to finish the 100 Back 3rd in my age group! Then 6th in 200 IM, 4th in 50 Back, and 2nd in 200 Fly. In the latter two events I swam with the French National Champion whom I had met in Tunisia a couple of years ago. The final morning, I swam the 400 IM for 2nd place and had the privilege of spending a few moments with the victor from Estonia.

Exploring the West Bay area of Doha between swim days offered glimpses of its international character and impressive development. Doha truly embodies internationalism, boasting cleanliness, minimal litter, and a generally polite populace. Since the discovery of oil in 1939, the city has experienced exponential growth and prosperity. This surge in wealth has attracted a diverse workforce from Northern Africa, India, Pakistan, Nepal, the Philippines, and beyond.



Large open-air market Souq Waqif stands as a vibrant testament to Doha's allure, lively with shops, restaurants, and bustling activity after nightfall. It's a place where people come not only to shop but also to see and be seen, filling the streets and alleyways with energy and excitement.

Reflecting on my experience, certain observations and lessons stand out. The call room setup, akin to staging areas at USMS Championships, required us to navigate through crowded spaces between the 50-meter pools, often leading to extended waiting times before races. In hindsight, seeking out less congested areas for warm-up exercises would have been wise. And contrary to expectations, the promised vendor village sorely lacked WAMC-branded merchandise, disappointing many attendees.

Another challenge was the culture clash between the openness of many Europeans regarding on-deck changing and **Qatar's modesty rules. Special recognition goes to USMS' head meet official Nadine Day for tirelessly addressing** issues on behalf of athletes, a task undoubtedly fraught with challenges. Security was very present everywhere, with TSA-style screening when going into the swim venue, and into hotels and museums.

I met many wonderful people, some easy to converse with and others more challenging, though all were pleasant and **courteous. Another Australian competitor I met, Stephen Lamy, asked about fellow PSM'er Frank Warner (who would have been there but for injury),** whom he had spent time with at WAMC in South Korea.

Personally, the dearth of 50-meter pools at home poses a significant obstacle for training between short course and long course. However, I remain hopeful for the future availability of such facilities in our area.

**Future WAMC's? YES, YES, YES!** While the US Masters environment is very competitive and challenging, I feel that exposure to foreign venues supports the great competitive environment that we have at home.

# TWIM Volunteers at Special Olympics

By Dan Underbrink  
Via the TWIM BLOG

Saturday, April 21 saw the Washington State Special Olympics NW Regional Swim Meet being held at the King County Aquatic Center, in Federal Way. This event requires literally hundreds of volunteers and several TWIM members attended in a variety of volunteer roles. Three pools were in play at the Games. Two were for traditional timed swimming heats, and the third was for water walking, coach-assisted, and other events.

## Coaching

**There was a bunch of teams at this event and all of them needed coaches and assistant coaches.** TWIM's Scott Neuhaus has been working with one of these groups as an assistant coach. Scott told me he has been having a great time working with (and working out with!) his group of swimmers.

## Officials

Dozens of officials were present at this meet, ensuring that all events were conducted **properly and fairly.** TWIM's Holly Lickwala and Brent Barnes were there in this critical role.



## Timers

Lane timers also fulfill a crucial need at this meet and the WSSOs require a LOT of timers! There were two competition pools running simultaneously during the entire meet. Two timers are required for each lane. With 16 lanes, that means 32 timers are needed at all times! TWIM made a minor dent in this major initiative by **fielding three timers for the morning session.** The TWIM timers were Holly and Brent's sons Joshua and Nathan and your author for this piece, Dan Underbrink.

TWIM did not have anyone at this event helping out with marshalling, but this is yet another crucial function which requires a fair number of volunteers. The marshals help organize the swimmers, making sure each swimmer arrives at the pool edge for their heat – and in the correct lane!

## What's really important?

This event is really a celebration of these athletes and their accomplishments. TWIM members are happy to contribute, each in our own small way, to making these events a great experience for these athletes!

## How can I get Involved?

The Washington State Special Olympics Spring State Games are being held on June 8, 2024, again at the King County Aquatic Center. A group of TWIM volunteers is registering now for these Spring Games. New TWIM Board of Directors member Emily Castillo is spearheading this effort. Thank you, Emily!

## One more thought

I was timing alongside a young lady named Ellie. She was there to help, of course, but she was also able to **apply these hours to volunteer hours requirements for her school's Honor Society.** Do you have teenagers who need volunteer hours? This is a great way for a young person to give back and log a bunch of volunteering hours in one sitting. **TWIM team members aren't only the swimmers! We invite your family members to join us too, as part of the TWIM effort!**

# SPLASHForward Update

Some races go as planned and some leave you wanting another chance to hit your goal. Attempting a scaled-down **community pool ballot measure in '24 for Kirkland left us wanting another chance. The City of Kirkland was exploring a ~40,000 sq ft facility with our support. However, a February survey showed that while a majority of Kirkland residents supported a new community pool, a super majority (> 60%) said that they didn't support a ballot measure in '24.** Funding new public pools is no small feat, especially with 100% public funding. We certainly plan to increase our probability for success with the City of Bellevue by raising private funding and creating both private and public partnerships.

*How are public pool efforts across the region faring?* **We're holding a PNW Aquatics Regional Coalition meeting in late April to share status, learnings, and resources with our region's new public pool efforts. We formed the coalition in 2022 with those in the greater Puget Sound who are leading efforts to bring new public pools. Reach out if you should be included! We'll report out on the momentum in the next *The WetSet*.** Some good news from our So Cal public pool advocacy buddies in San Diego: San Dieguito Pools was successful in gaining School Board support for funding a new public pool at one of their local high schools. Go team!

## Water Safety

**May is Water Safety Month and we can't think of a better way to ensure our water-based communities are safe around water than to build new public pools so that we can create greater access to aquatic programs and essential swim lessons. Until then, we're building the high school lifeguard pipeline with our [HS Lifeguard Training Program](#) to ensure our pools can operate to the fullest and we help create a culture of water safety in our high schools. By the end of May, we will have supported 67 students in '24 and more on the way. Thanks to our newest sponsors, the Bellevue Rotary and Seattle Children's, for allowing us to expand our efforts.**

## Olympic Trials & Sponsorships

**We're excited for the Olympic Trials and all the PNW athletes that will be in attendance. We have some rather exciting news to share so be sure to watch our socials! We have launched a local business and corporate sponsorship effort to support our operations and programs. Know a local Eastside business we should talk to?**

## Bellevue Update

By the time this issue of *The WetSet* comes out, the environmental determination for the Bellevue Airfield Park site may have been issued. If there are no public challenges, the Master Plan that includes the new Bellevue Aquatic Center will go before Bellevue City Council for adoption. Adoption of the master plan puts the project into the design phase and secures the project site.

**We held a virtual community meeting in March and one question we heard was "What will happen to the existing Bellevue Aquatic Center?" It will remain in use. We have a SPLASHForward proposal that includes specific upgrades that would make it a full learn-to-swim facility with enhanced accessibility features while addressing many of the needs we've learned through existing program providers.**

We are beginning our early capital campaign planning. If you would like to be involved to provide input that informs the campaign messaging or help us test the messaging, please reach out, [info@splashforward.org](mailto:info@splashforward.org).

Thank you for sharing our efforts with a friend!

# Board Meeting Highlights

March 11 meeting

- Financials: Bank account balances as of 2/29/24: Checking \$43,936, Savings \$58,324, total: \$102,260. Net revenue January-February: \$3,441. President Sally Dillon, Treasurer Brent Barnes, and Secretary Steve Peterson will meet with Bank of America in Issaquah before the May 11 meeting to finalize updates to the authorized bank account signatory card(s). The board approved three proposals aimed at improving meet profitability: (1) raising the guaranteed profit per day per swimmer from \$6 to \$8; (2) temporarily waiving fixed PNA and USMS fees for a year, given that the event is sanctioned and posted 60 days before the entry deadline; and (3) provide a \$1000/day subsidy to offset the high facility rental cost for KCAC.
- Membership: 1,421 (781 women, 640 men).
- Meets: The TACM *March Madness* meet (Anacortes) went well; it was SCY format after several years as SCM. The July 6-7 LCM meet will **feature the same event order as last November's SCM meet.**
- Clinics: Bill Brenner (USMS) led a successful TWIM-sponsored stroke development clinic at the Snohomish Aquatic Center, assisted by seven PNA coaches.
- Next Meetings: Annual Meeting at Champs/KCAC, **April 13; Regular meeting May 11 at Sally Dillon's**

PNA Voting Board Members

- President – Sally Dillon
- Past President – Linda Chapman
- Vice President – Bob Moore
- Secretary – Steve Peterson
- Treasurer – Brent Barnes
- At-Large Director – Kathy Casey
- At-Large Director – Dave Scott
- Bylaws – Jim Davidson
- Meets – Lorraine Masse
- Membership – Linda Chapman
- Open Water – Jim Davidson
- Appointed Director – Bob DeWard
- Appointed Director – Dan Underbrink
- Club Director – Kim Boggs
- Club Director – Doug Jelen
- Club & Team Development Coordinator – Linda Chapman

Coordinators/  
Standing Committees

- Coaches – Linda Chapman
- Fitness/Clinics – Wade Praeger
- Historian – Walt Reid
- Media – Lucianne Pugh
- Officials – David Baer
- Postal – Sally Dillon
- Records/Top Ten – Doug Jelen
- Webmaster – Dave Scott

## 2024 Pan-American Games, Cleveland, OH

[Registration is open](#) for The 2024 Pan-American Games, which will be held July 12-21 in Cleveland, OH. The games include a [wide variety of sports](#) with the swimming competition scheduled for July 17-20 at Cleveland State University's Busbey Natatorium. There will also be [Para-Sport/Adaptive Offerings](#) for people of differing abilities.



INTERNATIONAL  
MASTERS GAMES  
ASSOCIATION

PAN-AMERICAN  
MASTERS GAMES  
2024 CLEVELAND

## Welcome New Members!

Allen, Finian  
 Andren, Ekaterina  
 Ashbaugh, Cooper  
 Beckley, Russell  
 Bohonos, Joseph  
 Brittan, James  
 Casey, Michael  
 Craddock, Mishella  
 Davies, Catherine  
 Davis, Brandon  
 Dean, Laura  
 Decuir, Francois  
 Doherty, Tanya  
 Eicher, Theo  
 Engelage, Evan  
 Eurton, Valerie  
 Fentin, Sarah  
 Fuglvog, Jennell

Gavigan, Daniel  
 Gibbs, Mason  
 Goerlitz, Charles  
 Hahn, Kirk  
 Haydu, Caley  
 Hegarty, Katie  
 Houseworth, Deborah  
 Howard, Kylie  
 Hunt, Ann  
 Hwang, Eve  
 Jarrett, Erin  
 Jones, Casey  
 Keane, Zachary  
 Kullman, Sheena  
 Lew, Christine  
 Lockhart, Chandler  
 Long, Earl  
 Manion, Gabriele

Martin, Melissa  
 McAleer, Jemimah  
 McDowell, Julia  
 McIntyre, Hollie  
 Merry, Alaina  
 Morgan, Carey  
 Narkin, Zack  
 Obertone, Paul  
 Onders, Randal  
 Ott, Trevor  
 Petrocco, Mario  
 Pineda, Mario  
 Pependorf, Joyce  
 Rabinovitz, Jonathan  
 Raisler, Anne  
 Ridle, Keely  
 Roberts, Natalya  
 Rucker, Meegan

Ryan, Bailey  
 Sasaki, Yasushi  
 Schepler, Calin  
 Schepler, Lani  
 Silver, Debra  
 Strazzabosco, Domenic  
 Torrez, Joseph  
 Wepman, Deborah  
 Wheeler, Jacynnda  
 Wilson, Sara  
 Wimmer, Emma  
 Wood, David  
 Woodruff, Charles  
 Xiao, Yue  
 Zajkowski, Robert



## 2024 SCAR Swim

Mary Singer, Mary Sue Balazic, Eric Durban, and Lars Durban all participated in the 2024 SCAR Swim Challenge, held April 24-27 in Arizona. This event was voted the #1 Open Water Swimming Event in the World in 2022 by the World Open Water Swimming Association.

The SCAR Swim Challenge consists of four separate swims of between 9-18 miles EACH held on consecutive days at different venues (Saguaro Lake, Canyon Lake, Apache Lake, and Roosevelt Lake).

For more info on this amazing endurance event, see [this link](#) and [this link](#).

# The Spotlight

An interview with Coach Tonya Heike of the Snohomish Aquatic Masters  
With Tom Walker of TWIM

From the Light the Seed  
From the Seed the Vision  
**From the Vision the Call...**

If you look in the Merriam-Webster dictionary under *Coach, U.S. Masters Swimming*, you will most likely find an image and brief biography of Coach Tonya Heike of the Snohomish Aquatic Masters (SAM). The very spirit of Masters swimming lives within her and she exemplifies its highest values.

She is full of warmth, sincerity, wisdom and an abiding love of coaching and an abiding love for her swimmers. I think all the great ones are like that. You may find her on the pool deck of a morning with a whiteboard talking to her team after a workout, or of an afternoon working alone with anyone who wants to learn.



**After over 40 years of being a U.S. Masters Swimmer, it's hard to overstate how important Masters coaches have been in my life, how I have looked up to them and been guided by them, and the role they have played in shaping my values as a swimmer and as a person.**

U.S. Masters Swimming has called forth such extraordinary people across all disciplines, and our coaching truly represents a history of greatness. Men and women who have selflessly contributed so much to us, from planning workouts to predawn practices to poolside chats, from advice to support, to leading us on deck and **leading us in life. They invest in our lives...**

The best coaches and the best people make you feel good about yourself, make you realize how close you always are to fulfilling your most profound aspirations, to that thrilling moment, that sudden launch when time explodes and at last you feel the glory of what you have worked for these many yards, these many years, these many miles, in every moment of every dream.

They teach, they inspire, they encourage, motivate, and assure. They have the gift of knowing us in our entirety, not just in the pool, but who we really are as people. They are nourishers of our being and champions of our success.

**It's really a matter of touch, and Coach Tonya has that gift.**

TW: How did it all start for you? Swimming, that is!

TH: I have loved being in the water as long as I can remember! Officially it all started at Hal Moe Pool in

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## The Spotlight (cont)

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Snohomish when it was outdoors and only open during the summer months. I started with lessons, then lifeguard training and finally as an instructor and coach in the newly covered facility.

TW: How, when and where did you find out about Masters swimming?

TH: **I knew about Masters from lifeguarding practices when I opened the pool during high school, but didn't really know much about it until 2015 when I was looking into coaching again.**

TW: When did you decide to become a Masters Coach, and why?

TH: **It's all my husband's fault 😊. One day he said, "After being married for 20 years, maybe you should teach me how to side breathe." I was teaching him at the local Y and one of the staff members said that they were looking to re-start their Masters swimming team and would I be interested. My first response was "no thanks, I've coached before and it really isn't what I love." Then I did a little research and realized that coaching adults is a lot different from coaching youth and high schoolers. I love coaching swimming and I love encouraging people and simply put, that is what being a Masters coach is all about.**

TW: Why do you think Masters swimming is important to so many?

TH: The reasons that people swim masters are probably as many as there are people swimming. Some love returning to a sport they have done before and finding out that the masters meets are so much fun, some are looking for a swim community & camaraderie, and some are looking for a coach to help with technique and adjust workouts to fit the swimmer better or for variety in their workouts.

TW: What are the key points of your coaching philosophy as you work with Masters swimmers?

TH: **We'll all be amazing swimmers at 104 when we never stop learning, so keep on swimming!**

- **Swimmers are amazing people...they have families, jobs, hobbies, and interests yet find time to hop into the pool.** I am forever thankful for each one that I get to coach.

- My job is to help swimmers achieve their goals.

- Competition is important to help the swimmer complete their own goals, not to just compare themselves to other swimmers. Swimming success is more than getting a fast time.

- **Quality over quantity. Inefficient technique done over and over might build fitness, but if it's done with power at speed for a long distance, it can lead to pain and possible injury. If the stroke is done properly, it reduces injury, increases efficiency, AND then we can build a base upon which we build speed.**

TW: What are the joys and what are the challenges of working with Masters Swimmers?

TH: Here are a few of my favorite things, which occasionally can double up as challenges too, depending on how you look at them.

I love the learning process. As a previous teacher, being a part of that is very rewarding. When a swimmer tries **something new, struggles, tweaks, adapts and continues to work at it until they find success, it's the BEST! If you ever want to give joy to a coach or teacher, let them know something you learned from them and how that made you feel.** Getting to know our swimmers is such a joy and learning from other coaches and programs keep me up to date and

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## The Spotlight (cont)

(Continued from page 17)

trying new things.

Those same lives that I love to hear about must also get prioritized over swimming, sometimes leading to inconsistent attendance, occasionally stressed-out swimmers, and lane drama. Keeping everyone engaged in a workout that is appropriate for their level and goals always keeps me on my toes.

TW: Tell us a bit about the history of SAM.

TH: SAM started with a small group of swimmers that met with the Director before the Snohomish Aquatic Center (SAC) opened to see if they could start up a Masters Swim Team. In 2014 SAM was started with Coaches Mary Armstrong and Jenny Service leading the way. SAM strives to include all levels of swimmers **with different interests, whether it's competitive, casual, open water, or triathletes.**

TW: What do you feel is the main goal of your program?

TH: Build a community of swimmers that come together for comradery, competition, fitness and/or with the mindset of improvement.

TW: What is your vision for the future of SAM?

TH: At SAM we want to build healthy swimmers by growing our numbers, meeting swimmer goals, and developing skills. We just started some open water Saturday swims this last summer and plan to add some more this year. We are also looking into ways to network with local professionals to offer clinics in shoulder health, back health, sports nutrition, and dry land training.



TW: What would you say to those you want to become Masters Swimmers?

TH: **We are a fun and friendly bunch and you don't have to be fast to join us. Jump on in and try a few workouts and see if it fits.**

TW: Any parting thoughts?

TH: **In addition to coaching SAM, I've gone back to instructing private lessons at our pool for adults at all skill levels. People who swim Masters are often great instructors and there is always a need for more instructors, so this is a shameless plug! Teaching a newbie to swim for the first time is very rewarding and could save their life. The American Red Cross released a survey that found that while 80 percent of adults claim they could swim, 44 percent of them also admit they would fail a basic test. I don't know about you, but that's concerning.**

TW: **What do you do when you're not doing this?**

TH: My full-time job for the 30 years has been running my own business as a Mary Kay Consultant. I teach skin care solutions and build color confidence with a variety of customers. I also have two grown boys and am married to my husband Darrell. I love to travel, compete in triathlons, and garden both veggies and flowers.

# Swimmer Spotlight *EXTRA*

Long Swims Deserve a Long Article!  
The Melissa Kegler Story  
As told to Tom Walker of TWIM

It seemed like a good idea. As I sat with Melissa for our extended conversation and she nonchalantly rolled off this list of incredible aquatic feats, I asked her why, why did she do all of this. She told me before recounting each exploit that it seemed like a good idea. I was a bit astonished of course, because she related this account of heart-stoppers as though they were all just like some easy swim at the local pool, a latte run, grocery shopping, or maybe even doing a load of laundry.

Little things like swimming the English Channel, trifles like conquering Manhattan and Catalina, on to Ice Swimming and what next? Intergalactic exploration from your own front room? Reverse skydiving?

A friend of mine had told me about some crazy lady who did an entire marathon swim of 18.5 km miles around Coronado Island kicking on her back and looking around at skies and waves and birds and cities along the shore, and all that one can see travelling along in such a fashion. Sounded like an interesting new perspective and the kind of crazy that I like.

Apparently after she made the same shoulder motion a million times doing all this marathon stuff, it finally gave out, and she was suddenly deprived of her first love. Rather than whine about it, she decided that there may be a different way of looking at things and began this supine journey of hers. Brings up the fascinating question of what are you **going to do when you can't do what you do?**

I thought it might be a good idea to talk with her after reading her delightful account of this heart reaching seaward, and of this dauntless adventure of the soul. In her story she wrote a few unintentional novels along the way, as she **freely admits. I like unintentional novels. They're the best kind.**



I wondered about two things. From what insatiable urge could this insane desire spring and secondly, how she could handle these shifting perspectives of state with such grace and humor? **And yes, on that day when you can't do what you always do what you love to do. Don't know about you but take me out of the pool for a few days, and I'm ready for the lunatic asylum.**

Yet what I encountered in talking with Melissa was a rhapsodic expression of affirmation, an awareness of self and **sea, and the rhythm that unites them. It's about an astonishing peace. She seems to connect the world within with the world without, and for her, I think, they are one.**

And as we talked and as I thought about our conversation afterward, I remembered something Joan of Arc once said. **"I am not afraid...I was born to do this."**

So, we started where people often do. At the beginning. I asked her about how it all began.

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## Swimmer Spotlight *EXTRA* (cont)

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MK: I'm originally from Michigan, which has thousands of lakes and waterways. My mom grew up on a lake, so learning how to swim was extremely important for safety and self-rescue, especially since my grandparents still lived on the lake and we visited Up North on Lake Michigan every year for family trips on my dad's side of the family. When I was a baby, my parents took me to the YMCA and started me in the water babies classes to learn how to float. I continued at the YMCA for swimming lessons for the next several years but didn't start swimming competitively until I was a freshman in high school (which is really late in the world of competitive swimming). I went on to college, swam for a couple years, before deciding I wanted to focus on my studies and then stopped swimming. I swam with my club team at home over the summer and then picked up masters on and off after I graduated college, but pool swimming never really stuck because it wasn't a passion of mine, rather a way to keep in shape. At the time, I didn't know anything about open water swimming. I didn't even know it was a thing. I would only discover my passion and love for the open water years after I thought my competitive swimming days were over.



*I asked her how she discovered Open Water Swimming.*

MK: Open water swimming started with a family triathlon. My Aunt, who lived in Florida, was training for a triathlon and had an injury while she was training. She couldn't get a refund, but the race director allowed her to change categories from an individual race to a relay. My mom, sister, and I all decided to go down for a girl's trip. My Aunt could still cycle, my sister could run, and I decided to do the swim. It was my first competitive open water swim, maybe only a ¼ or ½ mile... I don't even remember... I thought for sure I was going to be eaten by an alligator. I had no idea what I was doing. I was intimidated by all the people in wetsuits. So I decided the best course of action would be to hang at the back and follow the crowd to see what they did. I didn't know my hibernating competitive side would come out and I broke away from the pack finishing a lot quicker than my original plan. I remember finishing thinking, "I think I kind of liked it" and that's when open water swimming was born for me.

*I asked her what ultimately made her take the fateful plunge.*

MK: That's a great question and the answer is more or less, I don't know. It was something about it that was new, familiar yet unfamiliar at the same time. I had no idea then what I know now about the incredible amount of knowledge that actually goes into open water swimming with regards to technical swim ability, understanding the water, understanding yourself, respecting nature, and being able to adapt, among many other things. It some ways I was drawn to it this inexplicable way. Open water swimming, specifically in the ocean, is something that goes beyond the activity for me. It provides a sense of journey, purpose, and connection, which is hard to explain. In many ways it is like a spiritual connection where you know you are meant to be with the

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## Swimmer Spotlight *EXTRA* (cont)

*(Continued from page 20)*

water, you trust it, and you understand it, without being able to scientifically explain it. I have faith in my relationship with the ocean and I think when you find that sense of faith, it stays with you for a lifetime.

*I loved to hear about that sense of faith that stays with you for a lifetime, because without it what could any of us do? I asked her who were her early mentors.*

MK: The first memory that comes to mind is my Grandma Byers. She lived on a small lake in Michigan and every time we would visit in the summer, we would walk in the muck to see how many clams we could find. There was one lot between her house and the small community beach that had a trail through the wetland: my sister and I felt like it was the biggest adventure to go through there, see the minnows, frogs, and fish. After a long day at the lake swimming, exploring, and fishing, we would get rinsed off outside by a warm tea kettle bath. Everything that I learned about the open water and wildlife, I learned at that house on the lake when I was young with respect to wildlife and **understanding the importance of nature and conservation. It's a memory I didn't know I had until it resurfaced when I started open water swimming as an adult.**

**Without a doubt I had many coaches who supported me along the way and really taught me "how to swim" in the traditional sense of competition. Brent Pohlonski, Sean Donegan, Bill Copland, just to name a few. They taught me the principles of hard work ethic, the importance of faith and belief in one's self, how to achieve goals, teamwork, showing gratitude, and helping others. They gave me the foundational skills to build upon.**

Just before I moved to Seattle, I met a guy, David, who gave swim lessons at a local community pool in Reston, VA. I was thinking about getting back into swimming shape, was dabbling in one- and two-mile open water events at the time, and came back from the Harbor Springs Coastal Crawl when he asked, **"When are you going to swim the English Channel?" It was the one question that changed the course of my life** because for some inexplicable reason again, I just said yes, that sounds like a good idea. I'm going to do it. When I moved to Seattle, I met my current coach, Ben Bigglestone, at the local pool here in Bellevue. I told him my ideas and without hesitation and only knowing me as a swimmer **a few weeks, he said yes, you can do it. Let's figure out a plan. Between David and Ben, it was the first time I really felt like I had been put on a course that I was destined to be on. Their unwavering faith was something new to me. I decided to embrace the journey and the unknown, moving forward, making friends, and helping to build a swim community that was really the beginning of something bigger.**



*I asked her to tell me about her overall concept of the Triple Crown. What led her take it on? Did she plan to do all three swims as part of a single objective, or did she just take them one at a time without connecting the dots?*

MK: Another mentor, Scott Lautman, told me Catalina Channel would be a good training swim for the English

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## Swimmer Spotlight *EXTRA* (cont)

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Channel. And while I'm at it, I should just do the Manhattan Island Marathon Swim (MIMS), and when I complete all three that will be the Triple Crown. So I said that sounds like a good idea, I'll do that too! You see the thing is, my naivety in open water swimming played a very big role in my journey. I didn't know enough to be scared of anything and since I was new and embarking on this journey that was exciting, I said yes to a lot of things because it sounded fun and I didn't know any better. Looking back now at all the "I wish I would have knowns".... I don't know that I would have changed anything in the journey, but I would have been more prepared in what was to come and how to schedule my time considering I also work full-time. Cranking out yards, as a very average paced swimmer in the world of competitive swimming, was really tough and I had to sacrifice a lot. I also have a very demanding job I loved, so when I was thinking about my plan, logically it made sense to do one big swim a year. Project management plays a very prevalent role in my job, so I approached the overall goal of the **Triple Crown as a project.... Seriously too, I have a binder, spreadsheet, and section tabs for each of my swims!** Project managing myself made my life and swimming easier because I could be agile and move things around without sacrificing my overall timeline and swim objective.



*By this time, I was reflecting on what an astonishing machine this lady is! I asked her to tell me about them one by one in order and what her experience was like for each one, including the monumental amount of training required.*

MK: I decided on the Catalina Channel first because Scott said it would be a good training swim. It's warm, there isn't a lot of current drift, and it would be a good test. I did a few shorter swims as practice, such as Lake Geneva, WI, and then swimming around Mercer Island, and when I got to Catalina I remember jumping in the water at midnight, terrified, already seasick, not really knowing what to do, and asking, "So what do I do? I just swim over there?" Ha-ha, I've never felt more like a newbie in my life! That swim was really hard because it was my first big ocean swim and I didn't even know if I was good enough to finish. I was throwing up every 30-45 minutes through the entire swim, I saw something under me at night, and every time I thought I can't do it anymore.... **Something amazing would happen!** I'd breathe and see a shooting star cascading across a dark velvet sky. I heard bagpipes from my boat captain at dawn. I saw bioluminescence light up the water with every stroke. I swam with 4 dolphins (3 adults and a baby) under me as I headed into shore. When I landed and hit **those rocks on shore, it was the first time in my life I completed something I truly didn't think I was capable of,** and that is a powerful feeling. The next summer was the English Channel and while it was the longest and most difficult swim technical wise, I was the most prepared for that swim because it was the one I wanted to do the more than anything else. Overall, the swim itself was really uneventful. It was as tough as everyone said it would be, but I was ready for it. I had an amazing crew, and amazing boat pilot, Eddie Spelling on Anastasia with the Channel Swimming and Piloting Federation (CS&PF), and it truly was the time of my life. I have a great blog post on my experience, but that swim I would say was truly the beginning of my love affair with the

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## Swimmer Spotlight *EXTRA* (cont)

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sea. I understood the water on that swim, each wave, each crest, each trough, each push and pull of the tide I could feel. I had a lot of conversations with the sea on that swim. I had a lot of moments where I remembered what a mentor or friend said, the advice of a coach, or something someone said along the way I was able to pull from to get me through. In many ways, the English Channel was my perfect swim.

And then there was Manhattan, the complete opposite. Three and a half years training for swims is a long, long time. I was tired; I am not particularly fond of New York after many bad business trips to the city, so I wasn't excited about the race as I had been for other swims. It is also brackish water, so I was aware that the possibility of seeing wildlife was slim to none. I chose an early date to get the coolest water, but there was a heat wave that

week, the water was 75°F, it was 101°F air temperature, sun blazing with not a single cloud in the sky. I overheated and bonked for the first time a couple hours to the finish. It was a very slow day for everyone and many of us got sick to our stomachs that final stretch. I was hoping to get a photo with all the new Triple Crown Swimmers when finishing, but I think we were all busy throwing up in the bathroom. It was a little disappointing to finish up the Triple Crown that way and easily of the three swims my toughest mentally, but that is open water swimming. You are never guaranteed **a good swim, have to trust in your training, and be more mentally strong than I've ever had to be for anything else in my life.**

*You starting to see how good of a novelist she is? I asked her to summarize her experience with the quest for the Crown.*

**MK: Completing the Triple Crown was an amazing experience that I wouldn't trade for anything, mostly because it taught me so much. I definitely think that I would have changed some things based on what I know now, like the timing of swims, putting more effort into some areas of training, and less into others. But you don't know what you don't know and I think sometimes things work out the way they are supposed to. There are other swims that the Triple Crown pushed me to do, like the Amy Hiland Double in Seattle (Bremerton to Alki Point Lighthouse and back to Bremerton), and there were other swims that I realized weren't as important anymore because of the Triple Crown.**

It also encouraged me to go into ice swimming because coming off of such a hard many years training, one piece of **ice swimming was that it was a goal that I didn't have to swim 35-40K a week (and that's on the low end for a lot of ultra-endurance marathon swimmers).** The Triple Crown guided me a little more to what I wanted out of swimming. It taught me patience, gave me new perspective, and opened the door to a bigger swim world than I ever thought was out there.

*Ice Swimming?? What in the world made her decide to do that?*



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## Swimmer Spotlight *EXTRA* (cont)

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MK: Ha-ha, the same thing as the English Channel, naivety and someone asking me the question, “Have you ever thought about doing an ice mile?” Jerome Leslie, an icon here at Alki Beach in Seattle, asked me that question. He had done an ice mile in Boston before moving out to Seattle, saw my abilities in the cold water, and thought it may be something I was interested in. He was right. I didn’t know anything about it, but it sounded like a good idea, so I said yes. I started training from there.

*I asked her to tell me about this training.*

MK: The training was tough because the water here in Seattle just doesn’t get cold enough, consistently 41°F or below. That being said, Seattle and the Pacific Northwest in general have a huge advantage over other locations because the water temperature stays relatively cold all year round and it doesn’t freeze over in the winter. This allows swimmers to stay more acclimated than places in colder or warmer climates. For me, I wanted to experience it all so I could see what worked for me and what didn’t. I tried cold showers, didn’t like them (it was my one source of warmth), I wore less clothing in winter (tried not to wear coats), kept the thermostat down in the house, and chased the cold around the state reading water temperature buoys to find where the water was coldest. I’d travel, train, and eventually experimented with early and late season alpine swimming as well, but the mountains are a whole different ball game when using them for training. It wasn’t just the dips that you typically see in social media posts, it was serious training where you had to have an incredible amount of knowledge and research performed ahead of time about the environment you are going into. I mean you’re going into the mountains after all, they’re alive, and you will be at their mercy. You have to think about the position of sun in the sky to the mountain, the lake size, water level, elevation gain, snowpack, self-rescue, avalanches, sediment make-up of the lake bed, forest, or mountain floor, stability of the terrain, natural hazards, distance traveled in, and ability to get out of the mountain if you are mildly hypothermic. It’s a dangerous place for training, but insurmountable beauty and reward at the same time if you’re willing to go there.

*I asked her about the events she trained for and the outcomes she achieved.*

MK: I started by training for the ice mile, which I successfully completed in November 2020, Denver, Colorado. As soon as I was done, I knew it was something special and that I wanted to do it again. After coming back to Seattle and meeting up with my ice swim crew, I started talking about adding distance. Not knowing what that would look like, I took my time to really think about the dangers of adding more distance, the challenges of training knowing there wasn’t much data on swimming at those cold temperatures for much longer than a mile, and figuring out training with work as it takes a lot of time and financial commitment to do so. I thought maybe it was a stupid idea, but it kept coming back to me. I re-evaluated my training plan and did several smaller training ice swims all across the state (anywhere I could find water below 41°F) leading up to what would be my longest ice swim yet and at the time, the longest ice swim an American has ever completed on record and ratified by the International Ice Swimming Association (IISA), a 2.2km ice swim here in Renton, WA. After completing that swim, I swore I wouldn’t do any more... by dinner time I was planning my next adventure.

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## Swimmer Spotlight *EXTRA* (cont)

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*So the next chapter was when she kicked an entire marathon race on her back after suffering a shoulder injury. My refrain had become familiar now. Wow!!!*

MK: Yes, the rumor is true, I kicked 11.5 miles (18.5km) around Coronado Island in southern California. After my ice 2.2K, I took a year off to travel and go do something fun for me, swimming the Outer Hebrides with Immerse Hebrides, and rededicate myself to work as I had just gotten a new job that I wanted to do well at. After my season of fun was through, I started noticing some of the usual shoulder pain, but this time the pain became more pronounced and increased quite rapidly. I had just gotten back from a swim trip in Port Angeles where I tripped over a dead Humboldt squid just below the waterline onto my bad shoulder and my first day back in the pool, I couldn't make 1400 yards and got out crying. I made an appointment, one thing led to another, and I was lined up for surgery. It was about that time layoffs were starting at my company, so here I needed surgery, not being able to swim, and a couple weeks later got RIF'd at work. I went from swimming five days a week to zero and not working overnight at risk of losing my health benefits. I was in shock and recognized that if I didn't do something and soon, I was going to go down a dark hole very quickly. I was doing a walking challenge at the time, a mile a day for a year, and I thought, I have legs, I have fins, I like kicking, and I'm going to start kicking. Initially, I wanted to be able to kick at least 2K so I could see my seals at my favorite beach. That turned into 4K so I could get to the taco place, 7K to get to Lincoln Park, and then some other friends came back from Coronado and I wondered if I could do that. I called Dan Simonelli of Open Water Swim Academy to discuss my idea. It wouldn't be ratified because I'd be using fins and other things to help support the health of my shoulder (after all, I had just had shoulder surgery in July and scheduled my kick for December), but we decided to give it a go. Why not? And the crazy thing was, it was the best swim of my life, that fulfilled a piece of my soul and answered some major life questions, and I didn't even swim. How crazy is that?! Yes, I kicked on my back 18.5km around Coronado. It was the catalyst to get me back into the water. It gave me a goal and it kept me from going to a very dark place mentally that I didn't know if I would have recovered from if I went there. Again, it was the one person saying yes, giving support to a crazy idea that grew approximately 18.5km.



*So I finally threw aside all psychoanalytic coyness and just asked flat out, why she did all these crazy things.*

MK: I have no clue! I've been asked that question 1000 times and there's always some reason, but I don't know that there's one overarching reason. I guess I just like trying new things in the water. I sometimes think about how I got to

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## Swimmer Spotlight *EXTRA* (cont)

*(Continued from page 25)*

the place I am today, how many challenges I've had to overcome, and how I survived it all. I don't know. All I do know is that I love the water, I love learning from it. I love going into the ocean and connecting with my animals and being in a place where I feel fortunate to have a glimpse into their world. I feel fortunate and thankful that my stories have inspired others to take their first swim, to make their first mile, so have swum their first marathon swim or channel crossing. Swimming has given me a place where I have family, where I can be **free, where we support each other's dreams that for many, once unattainable, became something they can touch.** Why do I swim? Why not, when you have this much good to look forward to.

*I asked her what's next.*

MK: I have a few ideas I'm working on, but after shoulder surgery last year I need to get back in the water and figure out what swimming looks like for me. I am definitely interested in swimming the Strait of Magellan at the **Southern end of Chile. It's a very interesting body of water that can be beautiful and turbulent at the same time, challenging, and a new learning experience.** I've also never been to South America before and think it would be a great cultural experience as well. I'm also working on ice swimming and seeing what that looks like for me. I want to add on some distance, but don't quite know what that looks like yet. It's a pretty scary thing to put yourself and your body through a traumatic event like that again. I view ice swimming as a self-induced hypothermic sport. There are real dangers to it, so I'm nervous about the idea of adding distance and want to make sure that if I choose to do so that it's safe and I'm approaching the swim responsibly. I obviously don't want to put myself at risk, but I'm also sensitive to what it means to my crew for me to be safe as well. More to come, I'm definitely looking forward to planning out the next 2-3 years!

*I asked her what she does when she's not doing this. You know, in civilian life.*

MK: Contrary to popular belief, swimming is not my full-time job. I am a public sector compliance specialist **(fancy phrase for auditor) and I love my job. It's demanding, it's rewarding, and it allows me to swim.** I coach some marathon and ice swimmers, but my coaching capacity is limited because I work full-time and am still training for my own events. I am a dedicated animal mom, taking care of my own cats, squirrels, **hummingbirds, and other animals I am sure my neighbors wouldn't approve of.** I volunteer for a local animal rescue. I am **getting back into hiking shape at the moment, which I can't say is going well, but it's going.** I like watching movies, I like sleeping, I like eating, and I like talking with my friends about swimming. I could easily **be converted into a couch potato which is why swimming is more than a need; it's a way of life.** The ocean found me, not the other way around.

*I left our conversation very moved by the intuitive connection that Melissa has with the depth and beauty of her journey. By her astonishing attitude. By a spirit that overcomes. By her resilience and her abiding faith in herself and the ocean that calls her.*

Doesn't the ocean find us all in the end?

## 2024 PNA Open Water Series

### Start planning for this year's season!

June 1 - **South Whidbey Island Masters** is again hosting this year's first event, the Whidbey Island Adventure Swim. The race includes 1.2- and 2.4-mile races off the shore of Langley, WA, beginning and ending at Seawall Park. Both distances follow a rectangular course, with the 1.2-milers turning halfway down the course and the 2.4-milers swimming the full rectangle.

<http://www.whidbeyadventureswim.org/>



July 27 - The second event is the Fat Salmon Open Water Swim hosted by the **North End Otters**. It's a 3.2-mile race along the Seattle shoreline of Lake Washington. The course runs south-to-north, generally between the I-90 and 520 floating bridges. The race starts at the Day Street Boat Ramp directly beneath I-90 and finishes at Madison Park.

[www.fatsalmonswim.com/](http://www.fatsalmonswim.com/)



August 11 - Swim Defiance re-enacts the 1926 Dalco Passage crossing. The race location is Owen Beach in Point Defiance Park on Commencement Bay in Tacoma, WA. There is a single 3K race on a linear course swim from Vashon Island (after a 15-minute ferry ride) to Owen Beach with competitive and non-competitive divisions. **Bernardo's All Stars** are hosting.

<http://www.swimdefiance.com>

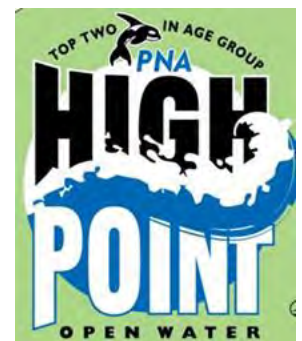


*These events are open to USMS members only. For non-USMS swimmers, a One-Event USMS membership can be purchased for \$20. (The fee can be applied to a full USMS membership.)*

*Enter more than one event and compete for The Open Water Series High Point Awards!*

We will be tracking finishes again this year for the Open Water High Point awards. The awards honor the top two male and female swimmers in each age group. To be eligible, each swimmer must swim at least two of the PNA-sanctioned events. The more events you swim, the more points you accumulate.

Points will be awarded to the top 10 PNA registered finishers in each event. One event registrants are not eligible. Wetsuit swimmers score points separately from those not wearing wetsuits. At the end of the season, points will be tallied and awards will be sent to the winners. See the [PNA website](#) for rules.





## LCM Summer Meet

### Northwest Zone Championship

Saturday & Sunday, July 6 & 7, 2024

Warm-up: 9:00 – 9:50 am, Meet starts: 10:00 am

Hosted by PNA Clubs and Workout Groups  
Sanctioned by PNA for USMS Inc. # pending

LOCATION: Weyerhaeuser King County Aquatic Center, 650 SW Campus Drive, Federal Way, WA 98023 206-296-4444

FACILITY: 8-lane 50-meter pool with 9-ft wide lanes and a water depth **range of 9'-10.5'**. Continuous warm-up available in 7-lane, 25-yd dive tank. The length of the competition course is in compliance and on file with USMS in accordance with articles 105.1.7 and 107.2.1, but as a bulkhead course, is subject to length confirmation. Eligibility of times for World & USMS records and USMS Top 10 will be contingent on verification of bulkhead placement.

TIMING SYSTEM: The primary timing system will be automatic timing. Times from this competition will be eligible for world record, USMS record, and Top 10 consideration.

MEET DIRECTOR: Sally Dillon: [salswmr@comcast.net](mailto:salswmr@comcast.net) (360) 929-5358

MEET REFEREE: Mike Murphy: [swimoff1@gmail.com](mailto:swimoff1@gmail.com)

CONCESSIONS: available in lobby

RULES: Current USMS rules will govern the meet. Feet first entry during all warmup except in designated sprint lanes.

ELIGIBILITY: Competitor must be at least 18 years old to compete. Open to all 2024 USMS or foreign registered swimmers 18 and above as of 12/31/2024. Foreign registered swimmers must provide proof of their current registration status. Age groups **based on the swimmer's age as of 12/31/2024**. 18-24, 25-29, and up in 5-yr increments.

ENTRY LIMIT: Swimmers may enter up to 6 individual events; no more than 4 events per day.

DECK ENTRIES: No deck entries except for relays.

#### ENTRY FEES:

- \$40 meet surcharge plus \$2 per individual event
- No charge for relays
- Relay only swimmers must also register. Same deadline and entry fee surcharge applies.
- PNA Swimmers who need financial assistance for entry fees may request same from the PNA Wiggin Fund.

1500 FREE: 1500 Free entrants must be able to swim the event in 35 minutes or faster. 40 swimmer limit (5 heats); a waitlist will be available. Heats will be swum fast to slow. Volunteer timers for this event will be appreciated. Participants must provide their own lap counter, if desired.

ENTRY DEADLINE: Sunday, June 30, 11:59 pm

SEEDING: All events will be swum mixed gender and seeded slow to fast except the 1500 Free which will be seeded fast to slow.

#### POSITIVE CHECK-IN DEADLINES:

400 Free: Saturday 9:20 am; (40 minutes before meet start)

1500 Free: End of event #5

400 IM: Sunday 9:20 am; (40 minutes before meet start)

For positive check in events, swimmers must check in by the deadline in order to be seeded. Swimmers who fail to check in but still wish to swim may be inserted into open lanes at the discretion of the referee.

RELAYS: Age groups: 72- 99, 100-119, 120-159, 160-199, 200-239, 240-279, .... **The sum of the relay team member's ages** determines the relay age group. Mixed relays require two men and two women. Unattached swimmers are not allowed to swim on a relay.

Relays will be deck entered at the meet. Deck entry relay entries due as follows:

#6: Saturday 10:00 am (start of meet)

#10: End of event #5

#16: Sunday 10:00 am (start of meet)

#20: End of event #15

AWARDS: NW Zone ribbons 1st-6th. PNA Medals for \$2.

ONLINE ENTRIES: [Enter online HERE](#).

ENTRY QUESTIONS: Lorraine Masse: [lorrynem@swimpna.org](mailto:lorrynem@swimpna.org)

#### ORDER OF EVENTS – Long Course Meters:

# Saturday	# Sunday
1 400 Free	12 400 IM
2 200 IM	13 200 Breast
3 200 Free	14 100 Free
4 100 Breast	15 50 Back
5 50 Fly	BREAK ~10 minutes
BREAK ~10 minutes	16 200 Medley Relay (W/M)
6 200 Free Relay (W/M)	17 200 Fly
7 200 Back	18 100 Back
8 50 Free	19 50 Breast
9 100 Fly	BREAK ~10 minutes
BREAK ~10 minutes	20 200 Free Relay (Mixed)
10 200 Medley Relay (Mixed)	
11 1500 Free	

## USMS 5K Virtual Championship

**Federal Way's** Aquatic Center has been reserved for 2 hours on Sunday, July 7 to allow PNA swimmers to participate in this **year's USMS 5K** Virtual Championship event. The 5K swim will begin shortly after the conclusion of the LCM Summer Meet. An estimated start time will be established after the meet entry deadline, and no later than July 3.

#### Important Details:

- 16-person limit – 2 swimmers per lane
- \$25 fee to help defray the lane rental cost. Bring cash or check (payable to PNA)
- Official application and USMS liability waiver are required
- Proof of USMS registration in the 2024 5K Virtual Championship is required
- Contact Sally Dillon at [salswmr@comcast.net](mailto:salswmr@comcast.net) to receive the application form