

# ***Starfish Swim Club***

## Parent Handbook

*Revised: Fall 2011*

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# I. Starfish Mission, Vision and Core Objectives

## Our Mission

The Starfish Swim Club founded in 1965, is a full service aquatic organization serving the Greater Capital District. Our multi-level competitive program offers an opportunity for swimmers of all ages and abilities to experience the benefits inherent with the sport of swimming. It is the goal of the Starfish Swim Club to offer a place where each participant can develop his or her swimming skills while experiencing a positive and rewarding relationship with the sport.

## Our Vision

To provide our members with the tools necessary to reach the highest levels of success within the sport of swimming and to instill the qualities which will assist them in achieving success throughout their life during and after their competitive experience.

## Core Objectives

The Starfish have adopted these core objectives to insure every member benefits from their relationship with swimming and the organization:

Maximize Potential: Through a well organized and defined program, swimmers in the competitive programs will have the opportunity to progress at their own pace, to the highest level of proficiency they choose to pursue. Coaches and instructors will consistently challenge each swimmer to take the next step on the road to excellence, providing a positive and rewarding atmosphere in which to do so.

Information/Education: Through it's staff, the Starfish Swim Club will provide information to swimmers and parents so all may come to know the benefits of the competitive swimming experience. As a "lifetime" activity, swimmers can benefit from a relationship with swimming long after their competitive years have concluded.

During the competitive years, the better the athlete and parent understands the dynamics of developing a competitive swimmer, the better prepared they will be to work together with the coach to achieve the highest degree of success possible within the sport.

Promotion/Exposure: It is the goal of the Starfish Swim Club to promote the sport of swimming within the Capital District. In doing so, the club looks to maximize its ability to provide opportunities to as many new members as possible. The more people learn about our sport, the more likely they will be willing to participate.

Achieve Competitive Success: We provide our staff with ongoing opportunities to enhance their knowledge base, to better enable them to provide swimmers at all levels with sufficient training, supervision and motivation to excel. It is our goal for all to achieve success.

With guidance from their coaches, each swimmer will have the opportunity to define “success” as it applies to them individually. From that point, the entire Starfish organization is committed to assisting each swimmer in their quest to achieve that goal.

**EXCELLENCE is achieved through COMMITMENT**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Can be found on the [Starfish website](#). Direct links are provided should you wish to contact any member of the Board.

## II. Starfish History

The Starfish Swim Club began its mission to provide quality instruction and coaching to the Albany area as the SUNYA Swim Club in 1965. Originally it served the University of Albany and surrounding community families. The University of Albany pool served as the first training site for the club. In 1980, the club was incorporated as a non-for-profit educational corporation named the Albany Starfish Swim Club. As the club grew in numbers, additional training sites were sought to adequately address the training needs of its swimmers. In 1988, the Voorheesville Swim Club merged with the Albany Starfish and the name of the club was changed to the A-V Starfish. The club recently returned to the Albany Starfish name, which more accurately describes the diversity of its membership throughout the greater capital district region.

The club has utilized many Capital District swimming facilities throughout the years. As mentioned above, the Starfish were founded through SUNY Albany and the university pool served as its home. Throughout the years the club has utilized Albany H.S., the Public Bath on Central Ave., and Voorheesville H.S. to name a few. In 1992, the club was fortunate enough to secure the newly built pool at Siena College and began the 2003-2004 season at both Siena and as the USA club chosen to inaugurate the recently completed Niskayuna H.S. facility.

The club is managed by the Head Coach, the Board of Directors and its officers. The Board of Directors is elected by the parent members of the Corporation. Parent membership is extended to the parents and guardians of all swimming members. They are entitled to vote in elections, serve as officers and are encouraged to become actively involved in the club by attending parent and board meetings, participate on various committees and volunteer when called upon.

Board members are elected for a two year term by the Parent members or appointed and approved by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors consists of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and nine Parent Members. The Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer are appointed members of the Board. The remaining positions are elected positions and chosen by the Parent Membership at its Annual Meeting. Board membership is limited to year round Parent Members.

The Coaching Staff is lead by the Head Coach who is a full-time employee of the organization. The Starfish were one of the first clubs in the Capital District to (in 1995) put together a full-time compensation package to include benefits for its Head Coach. Associate coaches are selected and hired by the Head Coach. Selection of the most qualified coaches as well as continued development and “mentoring” of the coaching staff is expected from the Head Coach. The Board has committed the resources of the club to provide attendance to various coach’s clinics and conferences when available to the coaching staff. Such requests are made by the Head Coach as he/she sees fit.

The club hosts two meets each year: the Starfish Trophy Invitational (early January) and the Meter Madness (June). These have become two of the most successful meets in the Adirondack LSC. These meets are not only fun for the swimmers but are a major source of financial support for the Club. **To be successful for the swimmers as well as the Club, ALL parents are EXPECTED to volunteer for various jobs throughout those meets.**

To promote team camaraderie, spirit and enthusiasm, various events are held throughout the year. Swim Mania, the Annual Swim Banquet and Starfish Picnic are but a few such events. Squad and team outing and informal get-togethers are organized by coaches, board and/or committee members. Parent involvement is always welcomed.

### III. Starfish Squads

Starfish Squad Guidelines & Requirements can be found on the [Starfish website under Swim Group Info](#)

**DEVELOPMENTAL:** Is the transitional level from lessons to the competitive program. Emphasis is on development of basic competitive strokes and skills. Through coach's feedback and drills, swimmers will learn proper body position, breathing and work on gross motor skills. It is the mission of the coaching staff to insure each swimmer enjoys their introduction to the competitive program.

**BRONZE:** Similar to developmental, the emphasis is on development of proper technique. Refinement of strokes, starts, and turns are continued at this level. As with the developmental level, the goal of coaches is to see that the swimmers enjoy their experience as they are introduced to training sets and more challenging practice sessions. Bronze swimmers are introduced to local USA swimming competitions.

**SILVER:** Swimmers at this level continue to develop their technique and racing skills with an increased emphasis on aerobic conditioning. More complex training sets are introduced and swimmers become familiar with the pace clock. They are expected to be able to take an active role in their development as a competitive swimmer. Goal setting and racing strategies are introduced at the Silver level. Silver swimmers compete at the local level and for some, out of district competitions are available.

**GOLD:** Gold squad members are challenged in both their physical and mental development as competitive swimmers. Practice sessions are demanding and each member of the squad is expected to focus on perfecting skills while increasing their endurance capacity. Gold squad members are encouraged to compete in all strokes and distances and discouraged from specializing in specific events. Gold swimmers compete at the local and regional level and prepare for Senior swimming.

**SENIOR 2:** For High School age swimmers who want a quality training program, but are not able to meet the demands of the Senior group. The focus is put on the events offered in High School swimming. As with the Gold squad, swimmers will compete at the local and regional level, with the possibility of qualifying for higher level competitions where time standards must be met to compete.

**SENIOR 1:** The most advanced and demanding group, swimmers invited to train at this level have chosen swimming as their primary athletic endeavor. Only the most dedicated swimmers will be offered this level of training. It is expected that they will maintain that commitment to swimming and demonstrate it on a daily basis. Coaches' expectations and squad standards are detailed at the beginning of the season and must be met in order to remain at this level. Regional and National level competition is the goal of this group.

#### IV. Standards and Rules for Practices (Parents should review with their swimmers)

**PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE** is the only way to succeed. Although attendance requirements are limited to the more advanced groups, parents are encouraged to have swimmers participate in all training sessions available. Coaches (like teachers) design practices to build on one another. Teaching of stroke drills, technique, and racing skills occur at every practice. Just as with school, missing a practice session will mean the swimmer misses valuable lessons and opportunities to improve. As with school, the focus remains on the squad, not on individuals and those who miss practices will have to pick up information from other swimmers or wait until that information is taught again.

**BE ON TIME for practice:** Swimmers are expected to be ON THE POOL DECK or DESIGNATED MEETING place, ready to begin practice on time. It is expected that each swimmer will have the training equipment designated for their training group at every practice session unless told otherwise by the squad coach. Swimmers who do not have their gear may be excluded from particular training sets so as not to impede the other swimmers in the group. Those reporting late MUST report directly to the squad coach before joining practice.

**BE CONSISTENT** with your attendance. If you are absent from practice FOR ANY REASON, let the coach know why, when you return. If you know you will be missing a workout or workouts (vacations, finals, etc.) let the coach know. YOUR COACH IS RESPONSIBLE for your development and they are concerned about you. If you are sick, or having problems which may have an impact on your swimming, it is important we know. If you need time off-ASK THE COACH! Maybe we can help. We CAN'T if you don't communicate with us!

**BE PREPARED** for practices. Have goals for practice sessions. Before you enter a practice session, ask yourself the following questions: Why am I here today? What are my goals for this practice? What are my short term, long term goals?, and—WHAT CAN I DO TODAY TO HELP ME ACCOMPLISH THEM?

**REMAIN IN DESIGNATED AREAS at all times.** DO NOT WANDER in unsupervised areas. We are the guests of the facilities we train in. No swimmer should be on the pool deck until a coach arrives. There will be a coach present 15 minutes prior to the beginning of every practice session. At the end of practice, swimmers are to clear the pool and deck area prior to the departure of coaches. When YOUR squad coach leaves the pool area, you should be out of the water. Do not re-enter the water without asking and receiving permission from another Starfish coach.

**CHECK YOUR MAILBOX** and make sure your parents get any information which is placed there. Make sure you pass along any information your squad coach may hand you or tell you when your parent(s) pick you up (or you get home).

**INJURIES** should be reported to the coach in charge immediately. Dependent on the seriousness of the injury and protocol of the site, coaches will respond accordingly. ALL reported injuries will be reported to the parent by the coach in charge that day/night. USA swimming accident forms should be filled out at the pool.

**DON'T INFECT YOUR TEAMMATES**-If you are sick-STAY HOME! A good rule of thumb, if you stay home from school, stay home from practice. PLEASE use good judgment in this area. Report an illness which will prevent attendance on multiple practice sessions to the squad coach.

### DURING PRACTICES

SHOW RESPECT for coaches and swimmers. Do not hinder or interrupt other swimmers during practice. If you are not serious about your progress, it doesn't mean others are not.

NO HORSEPLAY in the pool, on the deck or in the locker room. We do not want ANYONE to get hurt. You have put too much time and effort into your sport, and your development to hinder your progress by an injury that could have been prevented.

PAY ATTENTION to your coach. If the coach is talking to one swimmer, a group of swimmers or the entire squad, YOU should be listening. Because a coach isn't speaking directly to you, doesn't mean you can't benefit from that information. LEARNING REQUIRES LISTENING!

ASK QUESTIONS if you don't understand. This includes the set the coach has given you, directions about your stroke or anything you don't understand about what is being asked of you. The coach may be able to answer your question immediately but if you don't ask, (s)he never will!!!

FOLLOW DIRECTIONS from the coaches. If you are asked to do something - DO IT! Don't argue with coaches (especially during practices). If you disagree with a coach, discuss it after practice or set up a time to talk. PRACTICE TIME IS PRECIOUS.

If you do not comply with these rules and standards, most times you will first receive a warning. Continued violations may result in being asked to sit out on the pool deck, meeting with the Head Coach and/or your parents, or for serious violations - suspension or removal from the program.

## **BE SAFE, HAVE FUN, MAXIMIZE YOUR POTENTIAL**

### **STARFISH SWIMMERS ACHIEVE “SUCCESS THROUGH COMMITMENT”**

FOR PARENTS: During practice sessions, coaches are responsible for discipline as well as the athletic development of swimmers. Please refrain from interrupting or interfering with this process unless asked by the coach. Should YOU have any questions or concerns, please wait until the end of the practice session to discuss with the coach or contact the Head Coach. PARENTS NEED TO LET THE COACHES COACH.

No swimmer will be removed from the pool area for disciplinary reasons. Swimmers who fail to follow the above standards of conduct may be required to sit out that practice on the pool deck or be excluded from subsequent practice sessions. Should this occur, you will be contacted by the Head Coach the evening the misbehavior occurs.

Swimmers will NOT BE ALLOWED to leave practice early without prior written or verbal notice from a parent.

Complaints or concerns regarding a coach's disciplinary action should be brought to the attention of the Head Coach first, then to a Board Member if not resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned.

## V. Swim Meets

At the beginning of each season, the coaching staff will review available meets and select those which for each squad, and are best suited to meet the needs of the swimmers at that level and to prepare them for the championship season. It is expected that parent's will work with the coaching staff in this preparation by signing their swimmers up for those meets designated. Should families choose to enter their swimmers in additional meets, **coach approval is needed**. Competing in too many meets can have a detrimental impact (as can lack of exposure to competition) on the development of each swimmer.

As with any sport, participation in the championship season (or other meets designated as "TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP") meets is mandatory. Should circumstances arise which may preclude a swimmer from participating, the Head Coach should be contacted by the parents AS SOON AS IT IS KNOWN that a swimmer will not be available. Swimming is both an individual as well as team sport. Being part of a team brings responsibilities and degree of commitment with the decision to join the team.

There are basically three levels of competition available to Starfish team members. They are:

**DUAL MEETS**-The club will schedule a competition with another club periodically. These meets serve as an opportunity for newer, younger and less experienced swimmers to gain competitive experience in a low-key, non-threatening situation. They also serve as an opportunity to build team spirit. If you have been associated with a summer league or Y.M.C.A. program, these competitions are similar to those dual meets.

**USA SANCTIONED COMPETITIONS** can take many forms. Many are one day competitions which are split into two sessions where selected age groups are assigned to compete. Age groups in USA Swimming are usually broken down into 8 and under OR 10 and under, 9-10 (where there is an 8 and under class), 11-12, 13-14, 15-18 and Senior or OPEN. Usually where there exists an Open class, any age swimmer may compete at that level. Senior is usually designated for 15 and older swimmers where there may be college age competitors. The swimmers age on the first day of the competition dictates the age group the swimmer must compete in for the entire meet.

You should become familiar with the time standards for USA swimming. These levels are broken down to "B", "BB", "A", "AA", "AAA", "AAAA". Time standards are established for each level within every age group from 10 & under through 17-18. This provides an opportunity for the swimmer, coach and parent to evaluate a swimmer's progress in the sport as well as to serve as a method of targeting a particular group for a competition.

“B” Invitational Meets: Swimmers can only compete if they have yet to achieve an “A” time in a particular event. They may compete in events where they have not achieved that time standard. This serves to offer newer swimmers an opportunity to experience a level of success which they might otherwise not in an open competition. It also offers other swimmers an opportunity to compete in events they might otherwise not choose in other sanctioned meets.

“A” Meets: Swimmers need to have achieved an “A” time standard in a particular event in order to enter that event in these meets. These meets are designed to afford more experienced swimmers an opportunity to compete in a highly challenging setting. These meets prepare swimmers for regional or higher level competitions.

CHAMPIONSHIP or TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP MEETS -Time standards are common for these meets. The “cut-off” times may differ from the designated USA standards and are usually set to limit entries in order to meet length of session mandates from USA swimming. These meets which are multi-day meets, usually have both trials and finals sessions where the top (12-18 for 6 lane and 16-24 for 8 lane pools) qualify during trials to compete again in the finals. Trials and finals competition do not begin until the swimmer reaches the 11- 12 age group. ALL STARFISH SWIMMERS WHO QUALIFY FOR THESE MEETS ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE.

EASTERN ZONE CHAMPIONSHIPS - Only the top swimmers in the Adirondack District qualify for this competition. Held during both the Short Course and Long Course season, this meet takes place after the Adirondack Championships. Cut-Times, qualifying procedures and information regarding this meet can be obtained from the Head Coach or any Board member or on the Adirondack Swimming Website (see Links).

Speedo's, Jr. & Sr. Nationals, etc. - As with the Eastern Zone meet, information regarding these meets can be obtained through the squads coach. These meets have qualifying times and are typically for your senior swimmers.

### **So you're ready to enter a swim meet**

Meet announcements are posted on the Starfish website and on the Adirondack Swimming website. Check the STARFISH meet entry deadline (usually one week prior to the deadline on the meet info sheet) to ensure your entries are processed!

A complete guide for meet entries is located on the Starfish website. You should familiarize yourself with this information!!! Questions should be directed to our meet entry coordinator, the Head Coach or your swimmer's squad coach. If you do not have access to the internet contact a Board member or the Head Coach so this guide can be provided to you.

\*\* If you do not have access to the internet, make arrangements with your swimmer's squad coach for submission of meet entries.

### **How to prepare your swimmer for the meet**

Planning for a competition should begin the week before the meet. Whenever possible, the swimmer should complete homework assignments early in the week so as the meet nears, the fewer stresses and distractions they have to deal with. This will especially help those who become nervous prior to competition. Proper nutrition and rest is essential throughout the week but especially the two nights before the meet. Maintain the "normal" routine of the swimmer and family during this time as much as possible. Insure you have the directions, warmUp times, and any other information regarding the meet which will assist in getting the swimmer to the pool deck on time and prepared for the task at hand. Remember, the coaching staff will prepare the swimmer's skills and conditioning for competition, they need you to control the other factors in their like so they have the best opportunity for a successful meet experience.

#### **A Swim Parent's Do's and Don'ts**

-Cheer for you team.

Be in control of your emotions.

Don't coach your child during the meet.

Remain in the spectator area during competitions.

Help when you're asked to by a coach or an official.

Show interest, enthusiasm and support for your child.

Don't make insulting comments to swimmers, parents, officials or coaches of other teams.

#### **THE DAY OF THE MEET**

WHAT TO PACK - In addition to their suit, towel, goggles and cap, it is recommended that swimmers bring an additional pair of goggles in case theirs break or is lost during the meet. They should bring warm up shorts or pants and a T-shirt or sweatshirt. Depending on the venue, teams may or may not be able to have their entire team on the pool deck during the competition. At times, the teams have designated areas in a gym or other location separate from the pool. You should know where the designated team area will be prior to the meet. Swimmers should avoid cold or hot extremes in between races. An extra towel, footwear, and sleeping bag or blanket (when swimmers are located in gym areas, etc,) is also recommended. Suggested food items include sports drinks or juices, water bottles, fruits or vegetables, muffins or bagels. Most venues will have a snack bar available for breakfast, lunch and snack items. Cards, quiet games or

books are also recommended especially when they will be away from the pool deck in between events.

**WHEN TO GET THERE:** Swimmers should arrive at the venue early enough to ensure that they are **ON THE POOL DECK** at least 10 minutes prior to the **WARM-UP**. This will enable coaches to answer any questions, go over any changes and provide needed information to the swimmers prior to the beginning of warm-up. Swimmers should be aware what events they are competing in, including the event number before the day of the meet. It is helpful for that information to be reviewed with younger swimmers on the way to the pool.

**UPON ARRIVAL:** We recommend that each family purchase a meet program upon arrival at the pool. If a positive \*check-in is required for the meet or a particular event, make sure your swimmers are checked in at the designated area. If they are not, they will not be allowed to compete. Once you have purchased your program, identify which heat and lane your child is swimming in for each of their events. Some programs will give approximate start times for each heat. It is the responsibility of each swimmer to know what event, heat and lane they are competing in. It is recommended that for younger swimmers, you write the event #, heat and lane on their wrist/hand. An example is: 37FR-H2-L5. Once your swimmer is prepared, have them report to the coach, sit back and enjoy the meet.

**DURING THE COMPETITION:** There are several things the Starfish coaching staff asks your cooperation with. Please help and encourage your child to abide by the wishes of the coaches.

1. Swimmers should meet with their squad coach or the coach in charge **BEFORE** and immediately after each race. Providing immediate feedback, support and reinforcement is important. This is how the swimmer will learn to improve and prepare for his/her next race. It is certainly permissible to talk to your child after their race (once they have met with the coach), bring them for a snack or spend some time with them if they are in the team area, between events. **NO PARENT SHOULD BE ON THE POOL DECK AT ANY TIME – this is a liability issue.**
2. While at the meet, the coaches would like the swimmers to sit together as a team. Team unity is a very important motivator on the road to success.
3. Lastly, the coaches ask that the coaching be left up to them. Remember, these coaches are the ones who work with your child day in and day out. Once again, let them do their jobs! Questions or concern which might affect your child during the meet, should however be brought to the attention of the coaching staff.
4. **RELAY** - Relay selection is primarily performance based, however other factors may be considered. Coaches will inform swimmers who are on relays during the competition.

TRIALS / FINALS: When attending a competition that offers trials and finals, it is expected that swimmers who qualify for a final, consolation or bonus heat will remain for that session. Should there be ANY reason that a swimmer can not participate, that should be discussed by the coach with the coach at the earliest possible time. Under NO circumstances will Starfish swimmers or parents scratch an event without consulting the coach in charge.

**\*\*ABSENCE OR LEAVING EARLY:** Whenever your child is going to miss a meet after signing up, it should be brought to the attention of the squad coach. **If your child has to leave prior to the end of the meet, that should be brought to the attention of the coach at the earliest possible time.** **\*\*Swimmers are expected to remain through the session's conclusion whether participating in a relay or not. If unavoidable, then the coach needs to know. Swimmers who have been selected for a relay and chose not to stay, may jeopardize their position for subsequent relay selection.**

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD AFTER PRACTICE OR COMPETITION

Did you have fun swimming today?

Did you swim better this week / meet?

What do you feel you need to work on?

What was your favorite part of the meet?

What's the best part of being on the team?

What do you like the most about your coach?

How can your coach help you to improve?

What did the coach emphasize after the race?

Was your opponent a good sport? Were you?

What did you learn in practice / from the race?

Were you nervous competing today? If you were, why?

#### TALKING TO YOUR CHILD AFTER A POOR PERFORMANCE

Sometimes it's hard to know what to say to your child after a disappointing performance. When children know they did not swim well, they don't want to hear "You swam great!" And when they have had a poor race they don't want to be told "It's really not important." At the moment, it is important to them, and they should be permitted the dignity of their unhappiness.

Although parents mean well, remarks like these sound superficial and lack sincerity. Children can detect phony comments, and they resent them. When parents are insincere or provide false praise, children learn to place less value on their words and later may be unable to get gull satisfaction from deserved praise. In short, praise generously and criticize sparingly, but do both sincerely.

One suggestion for swimmers who always seem to focus on their position in the race results is to direct their focus on their performance as it relates to their past ones. Swimmers who find themselves at the bottom of their age group should be directed to focus on the other swimmers who are also in the same position, i.e.: 7, 9, 11, 13 year olds. Remind them that it won't be long before they are once again at the top of their age group!

Generally speaking, once the race/meet is over and evaluated, it is time to begin for the next challenge!!

## VI. Parent-Coach-Swimmer Relationship

It must be understood that not every child can become a world class athlete. No matter how deeply motivated or how many hours they are driven, they may only achieve mediocre success. If the program however, is well-planned and directed, every participant will gain from their experiences whether or not they ever win a race.

In many respects, Age Group swimming is a preparation for life. The hardest worker in the pool does not always win the race, just as the most studious student in school does not always achieve the highest grades.

Every athlete will learn that to reach their potential they must apply themselves intelligently, consistently, and conscientiously. The understanding of these lessons will be of immeasurable worth, not only in each athlete's swimming career, but in achieving their goals in life.

The success of Age Group and Senior swimming is not just an accident. It is a well-planned, well organized series of developmental stages within and toward a clear set of objectives with a consistent philosophy of total involvement. To maximize what each participant can gain from involvement in the competitive experience, it takes all involved in the process to work together toward that end. A clear understanding of each person's role and an open and honest line of communication is essential as well. To have a successful program, there must be a complete understanding and cooperation among parents, swimmers and coaches. The progress your child makes depends to a great extent, on this triangular relationship. It is with this in mind that we ask you to consider this section carefully.

### WHY KIDS PARTICIPATE

More than 20 million kids between the ages of 6 and 16 play organized sports.

According to numerous studies, they play because they want:

To have fun,

To succeed or win,

To exercise or become fit,

To improve skills and learn new ones

To feel the excitement of competition

To be with friends and make new ones

## WHY KIDS DROP OUT OF SWIMMING

A study conducted in 1996 by Suzie Tuffey, PhD, U.S.O.C. sport psychologist, shows that these are the main reasons kids drop out of United States Swimming:

Lack of fun,

Coach was negative,

Takes too much time,

Swimming was boring,

Parent's emphasis on winning

Enjoy non-swimming activities more than swimming.

\*\*Between the ages of 6 and 16, one of every three children playing sports quits.

It is a paramount objective of the Starfish organization to insure YOUR child has a positive and long-term relationship with SWIMMING!!

## VII. Your Responsibility as a Swim Parent

**The Starfish organization encourages parent involvement in both your child's development as a swimmer and with the club itself.** To do that, you need to first understand your responsibilities as a Swim Parent.

1. Encourage your child to swim, but don't pressure. Let your child choose to swim and to quit if he or she wants.
2. Understand what your child wants from swimming, and provide a supportive atmosphere for achieving these goals.
3. Put your child's participation in perspective. Don't make swimming everything in your child's life; make it a part of life.
4. Get to know your child's coach. Keep them informed of situations outside of the pool which may impact their training/development short or long term.
5. Keep winning in perspective, and help your child do the same.
6. Work with the coach to help your child set challenging but realistic performance goals, rather than focusing only on "winning or getting best times".
7. Help your child understand the valuable lessons sports can teach.
8. Help your child meet responsibilities to the team and to the coach.
9. Turn your child over to the coach at practices and meets - don't meddle or coach from the deck.
10. Supply the coach with information on any allergies or special health condition your child has. Make sure your child brings any necessary medications to practices and meets.

### VALUES KIDS LEARN THROUGH SPORTS

Your child can benefit greatly by participating in sports - but those benefits aren't guaranteed. They're the result of a cooperative effort among club and LSC administrators, coaches, officials, and parents. Those benefits come more readily when adults put the interest of the children first and leave their own egos and desires about winning at home.

#### THROUGH SPORTS YOUR CHILD CAN:

Learn respect for others.

Learn how to work as part of a team.

Acquire an appreciation for an active lifestyle.

Learn about fair play and being a good sport.

Learn about managing success and disappointment.

Develop social skills with other children and adults.

Develop a positive self-concept by mastering sport skills.

## VIII. Ten Commandments for Swim Parents

**THOU SHALT LOVE THY CHILD UNCONDITIONALLY:** Let your child know that win or lose, scared or heroic, you love them, appreciate their efforts and are not disappointed in them. This will allow them to do their best without a fear of failure. Be the person in their life they can look to for constant positive reinforcement.

**THOU SHALT NOT IMPOSE YOUR AMBITIONS ON THY CHILD:** It was not that long ago. Remember, you had good days, bad days, made mistakes and learned from them. Don't deprive your child the experience of working through those difficult times. They will be stronger because of it. Make sure they know THEIR successes are a result of THEIR efforts. Let THEM live the experience for themselves!!!

**THOU SHALT NOT COACH YOUR OWN CHILD:** Be helpful, but don't coach them on the way to the pool or on the way back or at breakfast and so on. It's tough not to, but it's a lot tougher for the children to be inundated with advice, pep talks and often critical instruction. Being a parent is a challenging task. So to is being a coach. To take the role of both, more times than not, compromises the effectiveness of being either.

**THOU SHALT HAVE GOALS BESIDES WINNING:** Teach them to enjoy the thrill of competition, to "do their best" and to "believe in themselves." If the focus is on the process, that is, in learning technique, working hard in practice, listening to the coach, the end product will be proficiency. Help them develop positive attitudes, the feel for competition, for trying hard AND having fun!

**THOU SHALT NOT COMPARE YOUR CHILD TO OTHERS:** (At least in their presence) - One thing that sets swimming apart from many other sports is the focus of competition. In swimming, one ultimately measures performance against the clock, not other competitors. A coach once said, "Don't tell who you beat, tell me your time". Help your child focus on their own performance and goals, not the performance of others.

**HONOR THY CHILD'S COACH:** Get to know the coach so that you can be assured that their ethics, philosophy, attitudes and knowledge are such that you are satisfied your child will benefit from their time and efforts devoted to the sport and team. Don't compete with the coach. As the coach becomes an authority figure, it will only serve to confuse the athlete and undermine the coach's ability to enhance the foundation you have already laid for your child.

**THOU SHALT ACKNOWLEDGE THY CHILD'S FEARS:** From time to time, everyone experiences fear. Athletes are no different, regardless of age. To acknowledge your child's fears is the first step in helping them overcome them. With that, they will be better prepared for the next one.

**THOU SHALT HAVE ONLY POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY AT A SWIMMING MEET:** Let the coach prepare your child for the competition. Let the coach critique your child's race. Your job is simply to be a source of support, regardless of the performance. Negative comments about the facility, water, etc., only serve to detract the swimmer from the task at hand - **TO PREPARE FOR SUCCESS!!**

**THOU SHALT PAUSE BEFORE THY ACT:** Children tend to exaggerate, both when praised and when criticized. Temper your reaction and investigate before overreacting.

**THOU SHALT NOT EXPECT THY CHILD TO BECOME AN OLYMPIAN:** Think for a moment about the thousands of registered swimmers currently involved in competitive swimming. Think about the thousands who enter the sport every year. If this is **YOUR** standard for success, you have already sealed your child's fate in their relationship with the sport. Let them develop. Let them choose their goals. Let it happen.

## And Five for Swimmers

**THOU SHALT HAVE GREAT TECHNIQUE:** Technique is the foundation of swimming success. If you have stroke faults, at some point, improved conditioning will not be enough to overcome them. In some cases, stroke faults uncorrected can develop into needless injuries and retirement from the sport.

**THOU SHALT HAVE GREAT FITNESS:** Physical strength and endurance is the key to great fitness. Attendance, participation and effort in practice sessions will develop these attributes in athletes. As goals and expectations increase, so will your commitment to practice the sport.

**THOU SHALT CONVERT ENERGY WELL:** Without getting too technical, you are only as good (or fast) as your body's ability to generate and convert energy into usable form. In order to develop and enhance this process, you **MUST** swim **FAST** in practice sessions. Don't quit in the middle of a set. Don't back off a repeat to "save it" for the next one. Every time you push yourself through that "barrier" you are better prepared for the next challenge. Make every practice count!!

**THOU SHALT HAVE GREAT RACING SKILLS:** "If you don't do it at a meet, don't do it at practice." Always work at your racing skills. Take the opportunity to work starts, turns, finishes and race strategy. If you do it every day at practice sessions, it will come naturally at a meet. Being prepared to compete will allow you to do your best at meets.

**THOU SHALT LOVE SWIMMING:** If you don't you won't give it (or yourself) an opportunity to succeed. If this is the case, your time would be better spent looking for or participating in something else you can love or commit yourself to. Twenty years from now only **YOU** will care if your time in swimming was worth it. **DO IT FOR YOURSELF!!** Decide what you want from swimming - **NOW GO GET IT!!**

## EMPHASIZING FUN, SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND STRIVING TO WIN

The reason you as a parent should emphasize fun is quite simple: Without it, your child may not want to keep swimming. Children don't have fun when they stand around in practice or don't get to swim in meets, when they feel pressure to win and don't improve or learn new skills. Conversely, they DO have fun when practices are well organized, they get to swim in meets, they develop new skills and the focus is on the "STRIVING" to win. When the focus is on developing skills and striving to win, it takes the pressure off winning, which, as we say, no one is in control of. But all children can improve their swimming skills. When they see that improvement, they are usually motivated to improve more. Developing skills is one of the most satisfying aspects of playing sports.

## IX. Tips for Parents

You have done a great deal to raise your child. You created the environment in which they are growing up. Your child is a product of your values, the structure you have provided, and the model you have been. The following guidelines are provided to help you in keeping your child's development as a competitive swimmer in the proper perspective.

1. Every individual learns at a different rate and responds differently to the various methods of presenting skills. The slower learner obviously takes more time to learn and patience on the part of the parents and coaches, who must remember that his/her ultimate swimming potential may be as great or greater than that of the faster learner.
2. When an athlete first comes out for a team and starts practicing, it is possible for him/her to worsen rather than improve. This is likely to occur in swimmers who have not trained in a structured USA swimming program previously. There is most likely, a greater emphasis on stroke technique at this level than they may have experienced on their summer or league clubs. It is essential that swimmers first develop proper technique before they are exposed to higher physical stress demands. As they improve their technique, they will see the result in improved times.
3. Plateaus can occur at any time in every swimmer's career. Plateaus can be both in competition and in training. A plateau usually signifies the swimmer has mastered lower-level skills and training stress levels. It can mean that the swimmer is ready to move to the next level or needs to re-evaluate their present effort and commitment to the sport. Recognition of a "plateau" may come from the swimmer, coach, or parent. What is important is that all parties communicate and work with each other to help the swimmer break through this period and go on to achieve greater performance and approach their personal potential.
4. Ten and under are the most inconsistent swimmers and this can be frustrating for parents, coaches, and swimmers alike. We are designed to offer a program of competitive swimming for our younger swimmers with the major goal being to have them with the sport when they are 12 and over. It is therefore imperative that we are patient and permit these swimmers to learn to love the sport.
5. Parents must realize that slow development of competitive drive at an early age is normal and perhaps more desirable than precocious or forced early development. It is important to lay a solid foundation which the young swimmer can build on. It is important that children learn to adapt to reasonable levels of emotional stress. The small disappointments they learn to handle at this level will prepare them for the larger ones that await them as senior swimmers and adults.
6. It is the coach's job to offer constructive criticism of a swimmer's performance. It is the parent's job to supply the love, recognition and encouragement necessary to help your swimmers feel good about themselves. Parents parent, coaches coach.
7. Parent's attitudes and models often dictate those of their children. A child may not be consciously aware of what is taking place while subconsciously absorbing powerful messages about their parent's

- desires. For example, be enthusiastic about taking your child to practice and meets, fund-raising projects, and team functions - do not look at these functions as a chore.
8. If you have any questions about your child's training or team policies, contact their coach, the Head Coach, or a Board member. Criticizing the coach in front of the athlete undermines the coach's authority and breaks the swimmer-coach support necessary for success.
  9. No parent should behave in such a manner as to bring discredit to the child, the team, or the sport. Any disagreements with the team should be handled within the club. Any disagreements with an official or outside influence (another swimmer, parent, coach, representative, etc..) should be brought to the attention of the Head Coach and handled by the coach.
  10. Be sure that your child swims because THEY want to. They tend to resist anything they "have to do". Self-motivation is the strongest force and serves as the stimulus of all successful swimmers.

### "SUCCESS"

There remains one final criterion that is valid for judging your child's involvement with the Starfish Swim Club especially during the inevitable "plateaus" which await each athlete for one reason or another. Consider that for less than twenty-five dollars per week, your child, instead of sitting home fixed to the television/play station, or roaming around looking for something to do, is enjoying a constructive program that not only fills much of their spare time, but also is exceptionally healthy, both physically and emotionally. Age Group competitive swimming is an excellent preparation for life!!

## X. Volunteers and Committees

The Starfish Swim Club is an organization whose success depends not only on its coaching staff but just as importantly, it's parent members. The only paid personnel on our club are the members of the coaching and instructional staff. All other functions and activities of the club depend on volunteers from the parent membership. If parents are not actively involved with the club in this manner, the quality of the swimming experience for your children as well as the fiscal foundation of the club will suffer.

Parents are encouraged to consider participating as a board member. All parent members are welcome at board meetings. If considering a board position, there is a board handbook which will give you a good idea of the expectations of the position. Read the By-Laws. Know the By-Laws. Below you will find a list of committees which oversee many of the functions of the club. If interested, contact a board member! New members and new ideas are always welcome.

### **Meets which the Starfish Swim Club sponsor/host are MANDATORY for ALL STARFISH SWIMMERS.**

The Starfish Invitational held in January and GOLD or SILVER Championships held in March are two such meets. In order to continue the exceptional reputation of Starfish sponsored meets, ALL families are required to provide assistance during the meet. Jobs range from helping with timing, set-up, clean-up, concession, programs, ribbon writing, working the scorer's table and others. Prior to the meet, the meet director will post work assignments with every possible effort made to assign you to a task of your preference. During the meet, every effort will be made to insure you have an opportunity to see your swimmer compete. With a cooperative effort, all will have a positive experience and successful meet.

### COMMITTEES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Communications - A most important club function, newsletters, team mailboxes, updating of the team website, phone tree and any suggested ways to improve team communication is a responsibility of this committee.

Executive Committee - Oversees the various committees and provides a monthly report to the Board of Directors on status of projects and areas of responsibility. Insures that each committee is addressing the issues and projects assigned to them and has the necessary tools to complete projects in a timely fashion.

Equipment/Apparel Coordinator - Works with the Head Coach to determine training equipment needs of squads and coordinates pre-season orders to insure all team members have required equipment at the earliest possible time. Handles orders, distribution and payment of equipment and team gear throughout the season. In addition, assists the Head Coach in procurement of large ticket items needed for the team. Works with the Meet Director to order merchandise for Starfish sponsored meets. Provides periodic financial reports to the Finance Committee Chairperson.

Finance - Oversees all financial operations of the Starfish organization. Advises the Board of Directors on matters affecting the financial activities of the club. Prepares annual budget for presentation and approval of the Board.

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## XI. Training/Registration Fees

Short Course Season - (Sept. - Mar.)

Long Course Season - (Apr. - Aug.)

Training fees are subject to change from season to season.

Generally, fees for the Long course season are approximately 1/2 that of the Short course season.

Registration fees and information is found on the Starfish website.

ALL Starfish swimmers MUST register with United States Swimming and that is done by the team registrar.

Families with more than one swimmer qualify for a dues reduction for each swimmer after the first for each swimming season. There is no reduction for the Developmental Squad.

Swimmers who compete in High School swimming on varsity teams are also eligible for a discount for the short course season only.

All fee deductions are done at the time of registration per season.

**\*\*Starfish alumni swimmers who swim with the team during holidays and vacations during short course season need to be USA registered and must pay the USA fee to be sure that they are insured. They should abide by the teams rules and code of conduct and should not interrupt the team training in any way. We do not ask for any other registration fees for short course season, but we do ask that they make a donation to the team through our Swim Mania campaign.\*\* All long course swimmers for the summer season must pay the long course registration fees.**

All checks and money are handled by the Starfish Treasurer.

## XII. Glossary of Swimming Terms and References

**Age Groups** - In USA Swimming, competition is primarily broken into 2 yr. segments. Events are swum as 8 & under (or 10 & under), 9-10, 11-12, 13-14, 15-18. Some competitions may have SENIOR or OPEN levels where swimmers of any age who have met the time standard for a particular event may enter.

**Attached** - An athlete member who represents a particular USA club in competition. An "attached" swimmer may participate in relay competition for that club at USA meets.

**Circle Seeding** - Where trials and finals are conducted, the trial heats are sorted/seeded by time - slowest to fastest EXCEPT for the last three heats. Swimmers who are placed in the last three heats are sorted by lane where the fastest three are assigned lane 3, the next three assigned lane 4, then 2,5,1,6 or in an eight lane pool, 4,5,3,6,2,7,1,8 respectively.

**Clerk of Course** - The person who is in charge of the area where swimmers report prior to their event. They may simply receive an entry card to provide to the timer or be sorted by heat and lane and remain in that area until they are called to the starting blocks. This process is common for 8 & under competitors to insure none miss their event.

**Course** - The length of the pool where the competition is being conducted. SHORT COURSE competitions are conducted in 25 yard or meter pools. This is the common course for High School or Collegiate competitions. LONG COURSE competitions are held in 50 meter pools. This is the common course for Olympic competition. In addition, most Short Course meets are conducted during the "Short Course" season (September to March) and Long Course meets during the "Long Course" season (May to August).

**Dual Meet** - A competition conducted between two teams. Age groups and events are agreed to by both teams prior to the competition. There are many swim "leagues" where dual meets are the primary source of competition.

**Event** - A specific race at a given distance, stroke and age group.

**Finals** - Where preliminary / trials are conducted for the purpose of determining the top swimmers in a race or series of races. These "finalists" compete again to determine the final placing in that event. The number of "finalists" chosen will be determined by the number of lanes and the host team. Normally, there are 6 or 12 finalists for meets conducted in a 6 lane pool and 8 or 16 finalists for meets conducted in an 8 lane facility.

**Heats** - The method used to sort swimmers within an event. The number of heats in a given event is determined by the number of entrants and the lanes available for competition. Swimmers are either grouped by times from slowest (first heat) to fastest (last heat). Where trials and finals are held, circle seeding is used (see Circle Seeding).

Heat Sheets / Program - Lists all events, heats and lane assignments for the competition. In some cases, a estimated "time line" will show the approximate time each heat will be swum. Competitor's names, ages and club affiliations are provided as well.

L.S.C. - Local Swimming Committee is an administrative division of USA Swimming. This body is responsible for insuring that the rules and regulations of USA Swimming are enforced throughout a geographical region of the United States. Its duties include governing over swim clubs, competitions, competitor, parent and coach members.

Lycra Suit - This type of suit is usually reserved for competition. Close fitting, the fabric is not designed for wear and tear and will get stretched out if worn in practice sessions. Team suits should NOT be worn in practice sessions!!

Negative Split - A swim where the intermediate times indicate that the swimmer is covering equal distance in less time as the swim progresses. Common example: second half of the swim is faster that the first half.

Nylon Suit - This type of sit is usually worn in practice. A more durable fabric than Lycra, it is heavier and fits more loosely. Swimmers sometimes wear multiple suits to increase drag for practice sessions.

Officials - Persons in charge of conducting a competition. Usually in white shirts, they are positioned around the pool and are responsible for insuring each race is conducted according to USA rules and regulations, and each swimmer is performing the start, stroke, turn and finish in accordance with the rules and guidelines established for that stroke. Parents who are interested in becoming an official should contact a board member.

Prelims - See Finals

Proof of Time - A requirement at most regional / national championship competitions to insure that all swimmers have achieved the time standard in a sanctioned USA competition for a particular event. Should a swimmer or coach be asked to produce a proof of time and can not, the swimmer will be disqualified from competition.

Referee - The USA official in charge of all officials. The meet referee makes the final decision in all matters related to the competition.

Seed Time - or entry time, the time submitted by a swimmer for a particular event. The time will determine the swimmers heat an lane assignment for that event. The time should reflect the swimmer's best time n that event at the time of submission. If a swimmer has not competed in the event (in most cases) submission of a no time "NT" is improper and will not be accepted.

Split - The time of a particular segment of a race. Split times are used to help teach pace and race strategy. Example: For a 50 yard race, the swimmer's split time for the first 25 might be a 17.85, and the final time 36.63. In a 100 yard event, the swimmer would have 4 split times.

Starter - The USA official who is responsible for starting each heat, insuring all swimmers get an equal advantage at the start of the race and calling the next heat to the starting blocks.

Stroke / Turn Judge - The USA official who is responsible for insuring swimmers adhere to stroke / turn rules governing that particular stroke / event.

Team Uniform - The designated apparel worn by all team members. Requirements may vary by club but at least, every team member should wear the designated suit and swim cap for all USA competitions.

Time Standards - Established by USA Swimming, these times help swimmers compare their ability to other swimmers across the country. Some meets will establish qualifying times which must be met in order to compete in that meet. These qualifying times are usually taken from these standards. The standards are broken down by age group beginning with 10 & under and are "B", "BB", "A", "AA", "AAA", "AAAA", from slowest to fastest.

Touch Pad - The part of the electronic timing system which rests in the water, against the wall where the race ends. A swimmer should be trained to "touch" the area of the pad (at the lip of the wall and below) in order to activate the system and insure the fastest race time.

Unattached - An athlete member who does not represent a club in USA competition. "Unattached" swimmers may not compete in relay competition in USA Swimming meets. A swimmer must swim "unattached" for a period of 120 days when switching from one USA club to another. The swimmer must also present to the L.S.C., a signed document from their former club verifying they left that club in "good standing" prior to competing as an "Attached" swimmer for another club. See a club official for details.

USA Swimming - The national governing body for amateur swimming in the United States.

Warm Down - A process where the swimmer recovers from a race. In this process, the swimmer breaks down lactic acid which builds in the muscles during the race, allow the cardiovascular system to relax and recover, and reviews the race and critique given by the coach to begin to prepare for improvement in that event.

Warm Up - A process where swimmers prepare for a competition. Usually conducted as a team, each swimmer prepares their muscles, cardiovascular system as well as their minds (focus) for the upcoming challenge(s) of the day.

## REFERENCES on the Web

- Albany Starfish Swim Club Website <http://www.albanystarfish.org>
- Adirondack Swimming Website <http://www.adirondackswimming.org>
- USA Swimming Website <http://www.usaswimming.org>
- Swim Info - Misc info on Swimming <http://www.swiminfo.com>
- Swim news online <http://www.swimnews.com>
- Swim World <http://www.swimmingworldmagazine.com/>
- The Deep End (swim apparel) [www.thedeependonline.com](http://www.thedeependonline.com)
- American Swim Coaches Assoc. misc info <http://www.swimmingcoach.org>
- Videos, books on swimming <http://www.sportsnationvideo.com>
- FloSwimming <http://www.floswimming.org>
- Swim Network <http://alpha.swimnetwork.com/index.html>

## **Addendum Items**

### **Amendment to Parents Handbook (2/12/11)**

First, in order to protect the privacy of Starfish swimmers, coaches and families, the recording of practice sessions is no longer allowed without prior consent from the Board of Directors. This includes all forms of video recording and still photography from any source.

The Board has given coaches the authority to request anyone found recording during a practice session to stop immediately. Failure to comply will result in the person recording being asked to leave the pool. Recording of swimmers is still allowed at swim meets, but we ask that families understand the specific rules and policies of each swim meet in which they participate.

Second, swim team families should not leave swimmers unattended for any extended period of time at practice facilities. While at swim facilities, unattended swimmers and siblings should stay in the observation area of the pool. It is acceptable for parents and supervised children to observe from the hallway outside the Siena pool; however any running, climbing on the wall or entering the exercise room is expressly prohibited. Starfish Swim Club rents ONLY the pool facilities, and it is important to respect the facility's rules and the safety and comfort of others that use the facilities. All of our swimmers, or their siblings, MUST be supervised by their family members or by a responsible adult designated by their families at all times other than when they are with their coaches during the practice session. This is not the responsibility of coaches, Board members, or other Starfish families.

Thank you for your immediate cooperation with both of these issues.

The Board of Directors developed each of these policies at the Saturday, February 12, 2011 Board meeting following a discussion of situations observed over the past several weeks. The safety and wellbeing of our coaches, swimmers and families is paramount, and we will be reviewing Starfish policies over the next several months with these concerns in mind.

Please contact any of the Board members with your comments, suggestions or questions.