

Central Area Swimming Scholarship Essay

Leading by example, a skill only learned through hours of meticulous observation and months of soul crushing work, was imparted to me at a young age. It all started when I began my training with the gold group of Northern Lights Swim Club at the malleable age of 12. Due to my insatiable desire to win, I vividly remember picking out the fastest and hardest working swimmers in the group and doing my utmost to beat them on every set, which rarely happened at first. However, day after day of this back breaking work, together with a tireless scrutiny of my betters on the team, led me to a pivotal moment in my swimming career. I noticed that my hard work was fueled greatly by the shining example set forth by the older, harder working, and faster boys on the team. Once I had wrapped my mind around this profound discovery, I knew that if I kept up the hard work, I, too, would one day become one of those team members who inspired others to be the best they could be. It was then that, through swimming, I had learned how to lead by example.

Fortunately, this invaluable lesson I had learned about leading by example was not just limited to the competitive swimming part of my life. As a lifeguard of several years, I witnessed firsthand what it was like to see coworkers who, after a long day's work, would take all manner of short cuts to get the cleaning done so they could go home a mere 15 minutes early. I applied the lesson I had learned in swimming of leading by example by keeping my head down and doing my job to the absolute best of my abilities. Slowly but surely, I can recall noticing my colleagues doing the same; rather than finding ways to escape the work set out before them, they simply buckled down and got the job done, as I had done. Eventually, this diligence became so commonplace and we finished our jobs so quickly and thoroughly that we generally were able to leave work several minutes early at the end of each day.

Again, the skill of leading by example came in handy during my brief yet highly instructive time as a swim lesson teacher. As many who've taught swim lessons know, the cold water combined with numerous crying young malcontents can make for a temper testing environment. As I witnessed some of my fellow teachers struggling to

control their recalcitrant pupils, I thought perhaps if I showed my proven recipe of a positive attitude at all times, combined with healthy doses of patience, I might be able help them in their endeavors. As before, it wasn't long before those teaching around me had picked up on my example and were employing the same methods I had used to be a successful swim instructor. I was struck by the noticeable difference in swim lesson environment of far fewer upset children, and much happier instructors.

As a drummer in the advanced band for the Alaska Jazz Workshop for several years, I was once again able to put my skill of leading by example to good use. Many a time I remember being with all the other band members in our practice room with our teacher gone, having left for a few minutes to fetch more music or other necessities for our practice time. During these times, it became the habit of a few band members to cause all sorts of trouble, from changing the tune of their instruments and playing loudly to amuse themselves, to causing general havoc in the rehearsal room. Without fail, every time the teacher returned, too much time was spent reprimanding the culprits and returning their instruments to the correct tune so we could focus on mastering our pieces. After several days of this I decided enough was enough, and the next time our teacher left on a brief errand, I began working on my own part of the music rather than sitting back and watching the theatrics unfold. It was not long before my astute, yet mischievous, colleagues caught on and were soon following my example. From then on, whenever our teacher returned to our room after completing his errand, he not only didn't have to waste time reproaching the previous offenders, but he found that since we had all buckled down and rehearsed our music diligently, we all had learned our pieces much faster than anticipated and thus were allowed a slice of free time at the end of class.

When I sit and reflect on the many times leading by example has served me well, as well as benefiting those around me, I find myself grateful to have swum on the same team as all those hardworking, older teammates whose excellent work ethic inspired me and taught me how to lead by example all those years ago. To this day, in all my team oriented endeavors, this skill of leading by example has not once failed to have a huge positive impact. As I look forward to the beginning of my career at the United States Naval Academy, and with its men's swim team, I eagerly anticipate the growth of my leadership skills to the highest level. With the honing of my leadership skills to this new level, I hope to succeed in all worthwhile undertakings and inspire those around me to do the same for themselves.

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