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www.swimaqua.org
Hotline 281-488-1582

AQUASTAR
Houston, TX 77062

Turning today's potential into tomorrow's performance!

AQUASTAR

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NEXT BOARD MEETING

Tuesday,
February 14

8:30 pm

Gloria Dei
Church,
Nassau Bay

**ALL PARENTS
INVITED AND
ENCOURAGED
TO ATTEND!**

End of Season Champ Meets

*Requirement for Some Swimmers,
Great Opportunity for Everyone Else*

Competitive AQUASTAR swimmers in the Blue and above training groups are required to attend one end-of-season championship meet. However, these swimmers are not the only ones who can benefit from participating in end-of-season championship meets. Gulf Swimming's champ meet series is designed to give swimmers at all developmental levels the opportunity to experience a championship-level meet. Swimmers who place first through third receive gold, silver and bronze medals respectively. Swimmers placing fourth through eight receive ribbons. Following are short descriptions of the three championship meets. See the AQUASTAR website and associated meet invitations for more information.

Spring Champs B & Under/12 & Under February 11-12, North Shore HS

This is a timed finals meet for swimmers 12-years-old and younger. Cut-off times for swimmers 9-years-old and up are the *USA Swimming 2005-2008 National "BB" Times*. Cut-off times for swimmers 8-years-old and younger are the *Gulf Swimming "BB" Times*. There are no qualifying times; however, swimmers cannot enter with NT (no time.)

This meet is a great opportunity for our newer swimmers and those still striving to achieve their BB times. It can help boost their confidence and competitive spirit by participating in a championship meet against swimmers with similar abilities, giving them an increased opportunity for success.

Spring Champs, 13 & Over February 18-19, Location: Katy ISD Natatorium

This meet is a prelims/finals meet for swimmers 13-years-old and up. In a prelim/finals meet swimmers participate in a morning session and the top finishers in each event return for the afternoon finals meet to determine the results of each event. The prelims/finals format of Spring Champs gives swimmers a great opportunity to prepare for the championship format of higher-level swim competition, such as TAGS sectionals or nationals.

There is no qualifying time for this meet, but swimmers may not enter with NT. Cut-off times for this meet are the 2006 Sectional Times for swimmers 15-years-old and over and 2006 TAGS times for 13-14-year-old swimmers.

Spring Champs, 14 & Under February 24-26, Location: North Shore HS

Timed-Finals Meet- The first part of this day is a timed-finals meet. There are no cut-off times for this meet, however swimmers with TAGS times in an event prior to entering this meet will be scored separately in their age bracket and will not receive points or awards for that event. Swimmers who enter an event must have swum that event sometime before this meet, i.e., swimmers cannot enter with NT. Qualifying times for the meet are as follows:

13 & Up – No minimum qualifying time but cannot enter with NT.

9-12 – *USA Swimming 2005-2008 National "BB" Times*.

8 & Under – *Gulf Swimming "BB" Times*.

(See "Meets," pg. 2)

Need an AQUASTAR Meet Cap for the Champ Meet Series? Stock up in advance! You can purchase caps from the main parent-on-deck at your practice pool or visit the AQUASTAR website for information on purchasing AQUASTAR merchandise. **If you find yourself at a meet and need a cap, see the AQUASTAR timing coordinator at the meet. The timing coordinator can direct you to a parent selling caps.**

If you've made up your mind you can do something, you're absolutely right. Kevin Gilbride

(From "Meets," pg. 1)

Time Trials- Following the end of the timed-finals meet, the host team will host a separate "Time Trials" meet. The time trials have no qualifying or cut-off times. However, swimmers may not enter with NT. The purpose of time trials is to give swimmers one last chance to achieve a goal time at the end of the season. Swimmers who swim time trials are usually close to TAGS or Sectional qualifying times. Some people refer to these time trials as "Last Chance" meets for TAGS and sectionals.

For more information about these or any other upcoming meets to which AQUASTAR is invited, visit the AQUASTAR website.

Be Sure to Pick Up Your 2006 USA Swimming ID Card

Your USA Swimming ID card identifies you as a registered member of USA Swimming. It also contains information you need when attending meets, such as your swimmer's USA Swimming ID number, which is required on all meet registration forms. Additionally, your USA Swimming ID card can be used as "proof" that you are a member of the AQUASTAR swim team, which can be helpful when asking for team discounts at team-sponsored retail stores, such as the A-Gleam Swim Shop.

As USA Swimming ID cards are received by the team, they are given to the "parent-on-deck," at the practice pool where your swimmer practices most. Therefore, if you have not already received your 2006 ID card, be sure to pick it up the next time you go to practice.

Helpful Hint for those Timing at Meets: **Don't use the Host Team's Sign-Up Board**

Most meets have a posted timer sign-up board. However, please do not use that board to sign up as an AQUASTAR timer. AQUASTAR procedure is to have parents sign up with the parent acting as the volunteer timing scheduler. Once the schedule is filled, that parent will write in the names of the AQUASTAR timers on the main meet timer board.

Helping Time at Meets is a Requirement for Participating

Each team at Gulf Swimming meets must provide meet timers proportionate to the number of the swimmers they have participating. AQUASTAR has recently been experiencing problems filling our timing requirement and many parents have found themselves being forced to time two, three or more shifts because not all parents attending meets are signing up to help.

Part of the problem is that it can be difficult for new parents to find the timing coordinators at meets. Another part of the problem is that timing coordinators do not know the face of every AQUASTAR parent, so they find all the AQUASTAR parents at the meet. However, in some instances timing coordinators have been told by parents that they will not time because they do not want to.

Remember, except for some of our coaches, AQUASTAR is an all volunteer run organization and requires all parents' participation to run effectively. This means everyone who can, should "take their turn in the barrel" by volunteering to time at meets.

It is understandable that there are times when a family's circumstances on a given meet day might prevent them from providing a timer. When scheduling timers, the timing coordinator will always take into consideration and try to make accommodations based on:

- When your swimmer is finished for the day
- The age of your swimmer and whether there is another parent with you to supervise your swimmer
- Any other special circumstances you're facing that day

Therefore, regardless of your situation, at least check in with the timing coordinator at every meet. The scheduler is usually a familiar face from the practice pool, such as a POD. If you do not know the PODs at your practice pool, just ask other AQUASTAR families to point you in the direction of the timing scheduler.

Finally, here is a well-kept secret of experienced timers; being in the timing seat is one of the best places to be to watch your swimmer in action. You might even get lucky and be the timer in your swimmer's lane so you can cheer him or her on!

Training Group Promotions

The following swimmers qualified for promotion to the next higher training group because of their performance at either the *HSC 10 & Under Open* or *Aggieland 11 & Up Open*. Congratulations to all of them!

From Red to White: Cassie Nagle and Ashley Yates

From White to Blue: AmyJo Foreman, Lauren Lundquist, Elizabeth Smith, and Maddie Varisco

From Blue to Gold: Will Stephens and Kyle Gonzalez

February Birthdays

Be sure to wish each of these AQUASTAR swimmers a HAPPY BIRTHDAY this month!

Claire Bottolfson, 2/1

Kari Budd, 2/1

Austin Witt, 2/1

Kevin Yen, 2/1

Shanna Jones, 2/2

James Tomerlin, 2/2

Zachary Dao, 2/3

Tri Nguyen, 2/4

Brett Jensen, 2/5

Amy Chan, 2/9

Sarah Fixel, 2/9

Nathan Chu, 2/10

Maddie Varisco, 2/11

John Wong, 2/12

Bennie Berezin, 2/14

Margaret Drake, 2/18

Luke Hamilton, 2/18

Will Kibikas, 2/19

Shannon Orlando, 2/24

Kori Garcia, 2/25

Katharine Silkowski, 2/26

Eric Ho, 2/27

Peter Silkowski, 2/27

Kenna Terry, 2/28

Caroline Baliker, 2/29



"In Your Lane"



Name: JOHN WONG

Age: 14

School: Sophomore, Lutheran South Academy

Swim Facts: Swimming for 10 years

Practice Group: Senior

Favorite Stroke: Free sprints, backstroke

Least Favorite Stroke: Breaststroke

Favorite Part of Practice: Warm-up

Least Favorite Part of Practice: Main set

Hobbies & Interests: Water Polo, Golf, Piano, Eagle Scout, playing computer games.

Other: Most memorable moments in the water have been training and swimming for the US in Australia and seeing Fiji, training for and playing water polo in the Junior Olympics and being a volunteer swim coach for the Nauticats!



Name: Luke Romanko

Age: 12

School: Space Center Intermediate

Swim Facts: Has been with AQUA for 2 ½ years

Practice Group: White

Favorite Stroke: Backstroke

Least Favorite Stroke: Butterfly

Favorite Part of Practice: Relays/starts

Least Favorite Part of Practice: Beginning

Hobbies & Interests: Chess, Running, Soccer, Math

Other: Has two cats and two dogs

AQUASTAR Family Needs Our Help

The following is an edited excerpt of an article that appeared in the **South Belt Leader** the week of January 22, 2006. Gaby De La Cruz is the brother of AQUASTAR swimmer Claribeth De La Cruz. The article outlines a brief synopsis of their situation as well as fundraising opportunities for people who want to help the family. For more information, contact Amy Castro at 281-728-2248 or Amy_Castro@ICTSTexas.com.

Son of Dobie teacher needs medical expense aid

By Stephanie King



Beth De La Cruz, a six-year J. Frank Dobie chemistry teacher, has taken leave from her teaching position. Her full-time job is now the care and recovery of her son Gaby De La Cruz. Gaby, a former Moore Elementary student, is diagnosed with the neurological condition Arnold Chiari Malformation Type I with Hydrosyringomyelia. He celebrated his 13th birthday on Dec. 26, asleep in a hospital bed. Three cakes sat untouched by his side. Morphine for the excruciating pain in his head was all the new teenager cared to ingest.

On Feb. 26, 2005, after collapsing at school, tests revealed a portion of Gaby's brain was protruding into his spinal column. The protrusion compressed his spinal cord and caused a fluid-filled cyst to form. This disrupted the normal flow of cerebrospinal fluid which bathes the brain and spinal cord. Besides headaches, Gaby has lost the use of his legs for weeks at a time. On April 5 of last year, Gaby underwent his first surgery to remove bones in the back of his head

to accommodate the Chiari malformation. Since Christmas he has undergone six surgeries. According to Beth, the surgery he underwent on Jan. 16 was different than the others. The situation had become life threatening to Gaby. The bulk of the surgeries were performed due to breakage or malfunction of the shunt inserted to divert the fluid. It was thought the malfunction was due to movement by Gaby, but the shunt even broke during a medically induced coma he was put into after the Jan. 16 surgery.

Last week, Gaby was flown to Comer Children's Hospital in Chicago. He is now under the care of Dr. David Frim, a pediatric neurosurgeon who specializes in such brain anomalies as Chiari. The Chicago move came after doctors at the Texas Medical Center exhausted all treatment options available to them. In Chicago, doctors have discovered a staph infection in Gaby's blood but have not discovered its source. Frim performed his first surgery on Gaby to remove his internal shunt and replace it with an external one in case the shunt was the source of the infection. The surgery went well, and Tuesday morning Gaby ordered his own breakfast, a meatball sandwich. Frim reviewed the magnetic resonance images of Gaby's brain and outlined his plans with Beth. For Beth, not only were new treatment options necessary, but new financial options for Gaby's medical expenses are needed. She has no more paid leave time available.

Monetary donations are being accepted in his name at Gulf Coast Educators Credit Union. Donations may be mailed to: Beth Delacruz/Gaby's Fund, Gulf Coast Educators Credit Union, account number 481642 at 5953 Fairmont Parkway, Pasadena, TX 77505. Additionally, rubber bracelets in purple, Gaby's favorite color, with the phrase "failure is not an option" will soon be available. A donation of \$3 per bracelet is being requested. For information, contact Laurie Etnyre, Dobie student support counselor, at 281-481-3000. A website with updates on Gaby and e-mail capability is at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/failurenotanoption/>.

PLEASE SEE INFORMATION ABOUT ADDITIONAL FUNDRAISER, PAGE 5!

PURCHASE YOUR TICKETS THIS WEEK FOR THE DE LA CRUZ FUNDRAISER

The AQUASTAR parents-on-deck at each practice pool will be pre-selling tickets to "An Afternoon of Magic," a spaghetti dinner fundraiser for Gaby De La Cruz, brother of AQUASTAR swimmer Claribeth De La Cruz. Those interested in purchasing tickets should see the POD at each practice pool.

The PODs will take ticket orders and collect the \$5 per ticket this week, Jan. 30- Feb. 3, and will distribute tickets at practice the week before the fundraiser, Feb. 7-11.

For more information, contact Amy Castro, at 281-728-2248, or Amy_Castro@ICTSTexas.com.

- What:** An Afternoon of Magic, Fundraiser for Gaby De La Cruz
- When:** Sunday, Feb. 12, from 1- 4 p.m.
- Where:** St. Hyacinth Church, Guyot Hall, 2921 Center St. Deer Park
- What:**
- Spaghetti Dinner - \$5.00/plate
 - 45-minute Magic Show featuring the Magic of John Danna
 - An Incredible Edible Auction: Cakes, Pies, Other Goodies.

All proceeds go to "Gaby's Fund"

For more information about Gaby and "Gaby's Fund," see the article on page 4 of this newsletter.