

Life's a splash

This relatively new swim club stresses life's lessons

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Swimmers of Splash Aquatics jammed into a lane while training at Makiki District Park pool on Wednesday.

Running is often used as a metaphor for life. How it is a marathon, not a sprint.

A case also can be made for swimming. That it isn't always about the specialty, but about the individual medley, where a swimmer competes in all four of the basic strokes: butterfly, back, breast and freestyle.

To be successful in the IM is to be successful at being well-rounded. Such is the philosophy at Splash Aquatics, a relatively new competitive swim club based at Makiki District Park with a satellite pool at Hongwanji Mission School.

In its four years of existence, Splash has grown from 20 to more than 80 swimmers placed at levels ranging from developmental and age-group to junior and senior. Each designation is commensurate with a goal set by both the swimmer and parents: become competent and comfortable enough in the pool for possible lower-level meets; compete at the state level, the regional level and then the national level.

Where Splash veers outside the lanes of the traditional club is in its structure and philosophy. It is a parent-run club with a focus on weekly life concepts.

"It is about the well-rounded young person," said Stacie Peralta, whose daughter Taylor, a UH Lab School student, competes for Splash. "It's not just about swimming. As I've

told my daughter, colleges are no longer looking at just test scores. They are looking at your activities in school and outside like community service.

"Swimming is such a commitment for both the parents and the swimmer. We liked the philosophy the club had from the beginning. It's easy for (swimmers) to burn out if this is all they do. My daughter also plays water polo and does other things. It's nice that the club encourages that."

The club's motto is "Believe. Endure. Achieve." It is easy to embrace but, as with any stroke, it takes work to master. One lap at a time, in and out of the pool.

"We're not always in the pool," said Doug Reyes, senior group coach who moved to Hawaii in 2008 from the Oakland, Calif., area. "We spend time swimming in the ocean, being together at the beach, and that creates a bond, too.

"If an 8-year-old wants to be here every day, I tell them, 'No, go do other things.' You don't want that passion and love for the sport to burn out early. Like in life, you want them to keep growing, maturing, realize goals and keep their passion alive. Swimming is a team sport and you want them to learn life skills, such as goal-setting, self confidence and discipline they can use outside of the pool as well."

Reyes, also in charge of the life skills concepts for the club, has an extensive coaching background in the sport — several of his former swimmers from California medaled in the 2012 Olympics in open-water swimming. Club co-founder Ryan Muraoka did not. He played football at 'Iolani, only becoming involved with swimming when his daughter, Alyssa, did so 10 years ago.

"I'd started staying for her entire practices because I was interested in learning, I didn't know the sport," said Muraoka, who helped establish Splash in 2009. "I got involved as a parent and a chance came up to give kids in the Makiki neighborhood a team.

"Our philosophy is pretty basic. First, for the kids to have fun. If they're not enjoying it, they aren't going to come back. Second, is stressing the proper technique. Last, is our foundation of the life skill concept of the week. That gets reinforced every day they are with us."

This week, it's 'new beginnings' to tie in with the new school year, perhaps having a new coach or moving up to a new age group, or having a new personal goal that will be carried out through December.

SPLASH AQUATICS
*Makiki District Park
Pool*

>> Practice times vary by group

>> Splashaquatics.org