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## Berkeley Aquatic Club Opens Scholarships



The Berkeley Aquatic Club Scholarship Fund has awarded over \$15,000 to nine families for the 2020-2021 swim season and looks forward to helping even more swimmers for the 2021-2022 season. Berkeley Aquatic Club and its parent booster club, Blue Streak Aquatic, has always informally helped families in financial need by forgiving or reducing membership dues or paying for travel and entry fees for swim meets. Jim Wood, founder of Berkeley Aquatic Club, and head coach for 37 years until his death in 2019, dreamed of a formal fund which would enable swimmers with financial needs to participate fully in the sport. He always said that no swimmer had ever been turned away from Berkeley Aquatic Club just because they couldn't pay, and he wanted this legacy to continue. Mr. Wood was actively involved in the U.S. Swimming Foundation which raises monies for swimming lessons for children with limited access to pools and swimming and wanted to use a similar model for the Berkeley fund. Before his death, he began the fund with his own money and Berkeley Aquatic Club families contributed. A committee was formed as part of Blue Streak Aquatic, a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation, and basic philosophies and procedures were established. At his death, monies were contributed to the fund from both current and alumni athletes, and he also left the fund money from his estate. This year, the fund became fully operational.

Mr. Wood intended for the scholarships to be need, not ability, based although he required that the recipients be “good citizens” of Berkeley Aquatic, embodying the core values of the club: Pride, Respect, Courage, Humility, Integrity, Commitment, Perseverance, Accountability which are painted on the bottom of the lanes of the team’s fifty-meter pool in New Providence, New Jersey. A committee of alumni parents administer the funds under the supervision of the Blue Streak Aquatic Board, using TADS, a National electronic-based financial aid data collection program employed by many private schools in the area to determine need, based on parental income and expenses. Although the committee generally follows the TADS qualification guidelines, they also consider special circumstances and issues for the family and this year gave extra consideration to those affected by COVID — caused income drops. In addition, based on the TADS results, the committee has been able to help some recipients access other financial aid programs.

Now that the fund is operational, Blue Streak Aquatic will work to more actively fundraise. The committee hopes in the future to expand the fund to provide scholarships for the swim school and to fund other programs at the pool to help area children who wouldn’t otherwise be able to learn to swim or to swim on a team, believing as Jim Wood did, that knowing how to swim not only saves lives but helps children to learn skills such as hard work and time management which help them succeed many other areas of life. The mission of Berkeley Aquatic Club is: “To develop student-athletes who are a credit to society. The Berkeley experience tends to shape and strengthen character throughout one's lifetime. Although Berkeley Aquatic Club strives to develop champion swimmers, the club measures success not only by national championships and college scholarships, but also by personal improvement, both in and out of the pool. Berkeley Aquatic Club is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and inclusive space for all athletes to experience the sport of swimming.”

For more information, please contact the Scholarship Committee at [scholarship@berkeleyaquaticclub.com](mailto:scholarship@berkeleyaquaticclub.com)