



Pinkie Phillips, a Tracy legend in the swimming community, died Monday morning, Dec. 26 at the age of 78, family members confirmed.

Phillips was known throughout Tracy as the swimming coach of numerous teams, including Tracy and West high schools, but what made her a local legend was her more than 40 years of work with the Tracy Tritons club swim team.

Her coaching career began with the formation of the Tracy Swim Club, which was later renamed the Tritons. Teaching since she was 12-years-old, Phillips once said she found bliss in the midst of dripping-wet children on a warm afternoon having taught generations how to swim.

"I love watching young swimmers grow from not being able to lift their arms or kick to being able to swim," she said during a June 2007 interview with the Tracy Press. "One of the greatest things about this is the older kids love the little kids and help them. And the parents have to give up their weekends to help their kids and support them. All the kids are very supportive of each other ... these kids are like my family."

Based on her contribution to the swim community, particularly her years at West High School, the Tracy Unified School District officials had named the swimming pool at the high school the Pinkie Phillips Aquatics Center in 2008.

News of her death brought sadness to many in the Tracy athletics community on Monday. Many said they were not surprised due to her declining health during recent years. She had reportedly suffered a stroke in December 2010.

"She's been struggling a lot with her health," said Triton's President Jody Price. "I was expecting the

call. It's sad. She was the leader of the Tritons; the coach of the Tritons for over 45 years. End of an era. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her family and loved ones."

Kimball Athletic Director Steve Thornton, a former co-worker of Phillips, said Monday that "I heard her health was declining a little bit, can't say it shocked me."

"She will be greatly missed," he said. "She touched so many young people with Tracy Tritons for many, many years. Loss ... very sad."

Former Tritons President Pam McCain said she too was sad, but not surprised. McCain said she had been watching videos of children swimming under Phillips instruction on Christmas night, and continued to do so Monday after hearing of her death.

"Tonight we're definitely watching (videos) in memory of Pinkie," she said.

According to Price, there will be no public funeral services at the request of Phillips and her family. Phillips has requested that a memorial/fundraiser be held in her memory and that all proceeds be given to the Tritons organization. The event will be held in the spring at a date to be determined, Price said.

"Tritons were her whole world and she wanted to do something that would have benefit the team and help the team out," she said. "Keep it more of a celebration."



Pinky Phillips watches her students while they practice in the Tracy High pool in 2007. Phillips died Monday morning at age 78. Press file photo

Read more: [Tracy Press - Local coach legend in swimming community dies](#)