
USA Swimming Outreach Manual

Forward

Several years ago, USA Swimming began to address the problem of the underserved (and in many cases unserved) population of underrepresented and economically disadvantaged youth in the sport of swimming at all levels. The lack of underrepresented swimmers, especially at the elite levels, was distinctly noticeable.

The “Minority and Economically Disadvantaged Youth Committee”, an Ad Hoc committee, was formed and later became the “Outreach Committee”. In an effort to set goals and plan programs, the first task was to determine the number of underrepresented and/or economically disadvantaged members of USA Swimming. We are just beginning to obtain hard statistical data through the USA Swimming registration process. It has become obvious that there are very few underrepresented swimmers participating, and even fewer economically disadvantaged. However, it has also become evident there is a tremendous amount of interest in addressing this need.

USA Swimming is producing this manual to respond to the interest expressed in starting Outreach club programs. This will be a dynamic document to be edited, expanded and rewritten as we learn, from your feedback, what works and what doesn't.

The goal of USA Swimming's Outreach Committee is to provide opportunities in swimming to the underrepresented and economically disadvantaged youth in the United States.

Outreach Committee Responsibilities:

- ❖ To increase participation of underrepresented and economically disadvantaged youth.
- ❖ To identify and implement creative strategies to achieve our mission.
- ❖ To partner with other organizations and agencies to achieve our mission.
- ❖ To develop and support positive role models and elite athletes.
- ❖ To educate and increase awareness of our mission.



Why Underrepresented & Economically Disadvantaged Youth Do Not Participate

In many sports, participants are stereotyped for either a certain position, event or group. For example, your typical NFL quarterback is a white male, weighing 220 pounds and is 6' 4" tall. In swimming the typical swimmer has come from a middle class Caucasian family, hence USA Swimming's nickname as a "country club sport". In order to understand why underrepresented and economically disadvantaged youth do not participate in swimming, we must identify the trends that discourage them. These trends are:

1. Historical traditions related to ethnic relations in society as a whole.
2. The history of an underrepresented group's involvement in a particular sport.
3. The proportion of underrepresented and majority group members in a sport and on particular teams.
4. The ethnic backgrounds of team coaches, board of directors and others.
5. The perspectives used by those who assess skill development and the areas from which they recruit their athletes.
6. Money, money, money. It costs swimming families approximately \$1000-

\$2000 annually per child to participate in the sport. Cost considerations: team membership, USA Swimming registration, competitions, swimsuits, goggles, travel, and other expenses.

7. Transportation to and from practice and competitions. Many children involved in Outreach come from single parent households and/or single or no car households. Single parents often are unable to transport their children because of the intrusion on work time.

There are solutions to the trends that discourage participation in swimming. As more organizations, sport groups, foundations, and individuals study successful Outreach programs that offer opportunities in a diverse society, solutions become available through education, cooperation and understanding.

Starting An Outreach Program

We all know the many benefits that a recreational swimming program brings to thousands of youngsters each year across America. Competitive swimming serves as a catalyst for school and life by teaching a swimmer how to be disciplined, budget one's time, set goals and cope

with disappointment. One of USA Swimming's three main focuses is to build the base of talent. Underrepresented and economically disadvantaged communities have always had, and continue to have, an abundance of raw and undiscovered talent. Unfortunately, most urban communities have been virtually untapped in competitive swimming. The structure, self-discipline, and self-esteem that result from this sport are purely positive. Swimming has for far too long been labeled a "country club sport". Our collective goal is to become more inclusive as a sport and reflect the true demographics of the United States. Swimming needs to be introduced as a lifelong sport to the underrepresented and/or economically disadvantaged population.

The involvement of underrepresented and economically disadvantaged youth in a swimming program may:

1. Educate children and create an understanding of different cultures.
2. Improve communication between different ethnic groups.

3. Create an alternative revenue source for a program.
4. Build membership in a swimming program that otherwise has exhausted its main resources for building membership.

What Assistance Can USA Swimming Offer?

USA Swimming and its Outreach Committee are currently involved in evaluating successful Outreach programs not only in swimming but also in other sports. The hope is that they are able to find a common ground that makes the possibility of success much more likely. USA Swimming has taken steps to create an educational foundation for starting programs. Sources include this manual, Major City Clinics with Byron Davis, the Outreach Coaches' Conference and workshops at USA Swimming's National Convention. It is the Committee's goal to give swim clubs and individual members the knowledge and inspiration to start an Outreach program.

At the 1999 National Convention, USA Swimming approved a new registration fee for low-income families. The purpose of this is to reach out to the economically disadvantaged youth throughout the country. The program reduces the fee an athlete

pays to National Headquarters for membership from \$25 to \$5 (the LSC may add additional fees to cover expenses). Our preliminary information indicates the national fee reduction has been effective in recruiting underrepresented and economically disadvantaged youth to USA Swimming programs. Each LSC determines how they will qualify athletes for Outreach Membership. They use national guidelines based on Federal Food Stamps, Free School Lunch and/or Federal Poverty Guidelines.

USA Swimming has developed an ethnicity census for the swimming population on its registration form. The purpose of this program is to get more accurate demographics about USA Swimming. We need to find out who we are before we can approach corporate sponsors to help support Outreach. An ethnicity checkbox was piloted in 13 LSC's during the 1998 registration year. This checkbox will be included on every new registration form. The Outreach Committee in collaboration with the Registration Committee will analyze the data.

In addition, there is the Club/LSC Grant Program. This program assists clubs and LSC's in attaining the three goals of USA Swimming:

Build the Base, Promote the Sport, and Achieve Competitive Success. Through partnerships and collaborations it is thought that these funds will assist programs and projects that might not be possible without the grant program. Each grant proposal will be evaluated on its own merits. How will it accomplish one or more of the core objectives? In 2000, USA Swimming's Club/LSC Grant Program gave nearly \$90,000 in funding to Outreach programs.

Beginning

The first and most important step is to decide that an Outreach program is important. As with most successful programs or projects, someone needs to enthusiastically take the leadership. Qualified coaches need to be assigned or hired. Some preliminary planning regarding practice facilities and recruitment needs to be done. Generally, due to lack of transportation, the most successful Outreach programs are those held in underrepresented and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Securing The Use Of An Aquatic Facility

The development of relationships with facility owners, managers, athletic

directors, school district superintendents and educators is critical to securing pool time. Most economically disadvantaged communities have pools in or around them, but you may have to look to find them. Departments of Recreation, YMCA's, YWCA's, public and private schools, and CYO's (Catholic Youth Organizations) are often good facility sources. Some of these may even have an aquatic program already in place.

Here are some steps to follow:

1. Identify under-represented and economically disadvantaged areas in your city.
2. Identify which schools underrepresented and economically disadvantaged children attend.
3. Identify which of those schools have pools.
4. Identify any neighborhood pools frequented by underrepresented and economically disadvantaged youth.
5. Research the economic demographics of your city. You can contact City Hall or the Chamber of Commerce for this information.
6. Identify the critical people who dictate the use of the aquatic facilities and

build relationships with those people.

The Director of Athletics within your school district will be able to identify which aquatic facilities in schools are not being fully utilized. This person may be a very useful resource. Consider selling your program to this person first before moving to the Athletic Director of a specific location. The ability to generate the support of influential spokespeople for your program helps to build your program's credibility.

Securing Funds

In an Outreach setting, the majority of the participants are at an economic disadvantage. While these children could be contributing members of your program, financial concerns hinder their participation. This is one of the great tragedies of club swimming in the United States. This tragedy can be avoided if the leader of a program is willing to do a little additional work to find alternative funding.

In most urban settings, schools are desperate for after school programming. After school programming is becoming an integral part of the American educational system. Since 1997, federal money for after school programming has grown from an estimated \$1 million dollars per year to nearly

\$454 million per year. Up to \$5 billion in public and private money is being spent annually on after school programs. Estimates on how many students are involved range from two million to five million. This growth in funding creates an alternative revenue source for swimming programs. Most of this funding comes in the form of grants from foundations, government agencies, corporations and school districts.

A second revenue source is your local government. Most local governments have a Community Services Department. Within this department there may be a person responsible for obtaining funds and developing after school programs. This person could be a valuable contact in assisting your program development.

The internet is another source that can be used to find funds to support your program. With the internet search engine, foundations, agencies and other companies can be found that are sympathetic to your cause. These groups are usually interested in supporting a specific segment of the population (ethnicity, economic standing, etc).

Contact your local businesses (regardless of size) about sponsorship. Many companies set aside a specific amount of their net profits to be used for community service. For the company this builds community relations. The first contact you should consider when contacting your local companies is the Human Resource Department. This department has the ability to identify who handles community sponsorship and relations.

Many government agencies have the ability to put you in contact with organizations that are able to fund, support or manage aspects of your swim team. While finding funds is not an easy task, it is a necessary one that is very rewarding to all those involved. Funding can bring another member onto the team, expanding diversity, ethnic education, and contributing to the development of the program.

Once you have secured funding from an outside agency look within your local government for more funding. In many cities, the mayor has a matching funds program set up to encourage the community to take action. The matching fund can be used for anything from planting flowers to developing programs such as the one

you are trying to start. The matching fund program could mean several thousand dollars for your program.

Once you develop a relationship with a particular funding agency and have renewed your grant with them for several years, many agencies promote successful programs to an automatic funding list. A stable funding source is what every program wants to establish. Major agencies, such as United Way, have a list of programs they fund automatically.

Writing Grants

Once you decide to have an Outreach program, your search for funding will take you to an area rarely explored by clubs in USA Swimming. Grant writing is an area that offers thousands of opportunities to raise money for your program. When you have a program that offers swimming opportunities to economically disadvantaged and underrepresented youth, your program is eligible for several different categories of funding. These categories involve:

1. Not-for-profit organizations
2. Underrepresented services
3. Children in athletics, promoting physical activity

4. At-risk children
5. Academic advancement (if you have an academic component to your program)
6. Opportunities for low-income families
7. Violence prevention
8. Substance abuse prevention

Through the use of the internet, you can narrow down the grants relative to these topics and then research each specific grant. Grants may be as small as \$50 or as large as several million dollars. One thing to remember is that rarely will you be able to find all your required funding from one grant. In most situations, you will have to apply for several grants to achieve all the funding you will need for your program. Avoid going for the all or nothing philosophy as it rarely works.

Once you have identified the grants your program is eligible for, look for people who can aid you in the application process. Contact your local university about classes they offer in grant writing. Perhaps you can convince the professor to use your grant as part of his curriculum or maybe a student in the class would like to use the grant for experience. Check with City Hall. Many times they

have a Grant writing Department or Technical Planning Department that is able to assist you in writing the grant. City Hall is an excellent resource in many cases because they have access to information that may not be readily available to the general public.

Look into different outside funding resources that offer grants:

- ❖ Municipalities
- ❖ Youth Organizations
- ❖ Foundations
- ❖ Corporations
- ❖ Media outlets
- ❖ Civic not-for-profit groups
- ❖ Sporting equipment manufacturers
- ❖ Pro sport teams and athletes
- ❖ President's Council on Physical Fitness
- ❖ Federal agencies

Top Strategies To Improve Your Chances

1. Develop a relationship with the funding agency. Relationships are the key to a successful program. Try to develop a win-win relationship where you are perceived as helpful to the funder. A good relationship with a funder may lead to obtaining inside advice that will be helpful in developing your proposal. You may be referred by the funder to other funding sources, and have an opportunity

to be selected as the sole project to be funded.

2. Start early and file your application on time. Follow the specific guidelines for each grant. This is critical for your eligibility.
3. Make sure the problem is identified and the need is well documented (i.e. economically disadvantaged and under-represented youth in swimming.). When describing the problem that your project will address, don't just identify the problem; also identify its underlying causes.

When describing your project, relate your methodology back to the problem and its causes. Showing the logical relationship of your project and its parts to solving the problems and its underlying causes. State the problem or issue in measurable terms and in a convincing and compelling manner.

4. Interagency collaboration with extensive community support. Agencies will want to know who else is supporting the program so if they are able to come through with only a partial amount they know

you can still operate your program.

5. Certify your agency's qualifications and proven track record. What will attract funding is the power of your ideas and your agency's qualifications for carrying out the work necessary to complete the project and achieve its anticipated goals and objectives.
6. Demonstrate how the program falls within your agency's mandate. Funders are interested in the needs you meet not the needs you have. When discussing why a grant is needed, focus on what it will do for your community and your constituency, not for your organization.
7. Submit a justified budget, and overmatch local contribution. A proposal is not an opportunity to take a funder for all it's worth. Keep budgets realistic, accurate and closely tied to project activities and staffing levels. Make sure all budget items are necessary and relate to the project's design and purpose. Show your commitment to the project by providing budget data on matching or in-kind

funds that will be provided by your agency and its partners. In addition to a budget breakdown by category, provide a budget narrative. Budget narratives should explain budget items such as travel and equipment that may raise a question.

8. Include a plan for making the program a permanent fixture in the community. Many foundations like to see a five-year plan for making the program permanent. The vision of a program is something that contributors like to see.
9. Develop an evaluation plan that includes dissemination of program results. A simple evaluation plan would measure activity and objective achievement during project implementation. Additionally, it would identify methodology and information required to measure goal achievement after completion of the project. A time line should be developed for the evaluation plan. This is to ensure that evaluation products are produced at specified stages of the project to track activity, goal and objective achievement.

Foundations seem to be sincerely interested in not only how well you met your own expectations, but also in how and why you may have fallen short of your goals. Most do not consider this a failure, but as proof that your organization learned something in the process.

10. Show how the program can be easily replicated. A model should be created that can be used in other areas of the country or world. The ability to document the procedures you use and how they can be replicated anywhere is of interest to your funding source.

What If Your Proposal Is Denied?

If your funding proposal is denied by the funding agency (and even good proposals are denied) contact the agency and try to determine why it was denied. Use the opportunity as a learning experience to prepare better proposals in the future. When you call to determine why the proposal was denied, make it clear that you're not calling to argue about the denial but to get the funder's advice on how you might improve your proposal.

Most Common Reasons For Denial

1. Failure to respond to grant program guidelines.
2. Project does not demonstrate an understanding of the grantor's need.
3. Use of pompous words and phrases.
4. Unsubstantiated claims vs. facts.
5. Excessive use of footnotes and references to the point where proposal contains no original thinking.
6. Vague generalization or a proposal devoid of a well thought out plan.
7. A weak or non-existent management plan.
8. Poor communication between grantor and applicant during deficiency period.
9. Unwarranted assumptions.
10. Overuse of boilerplate. Quick and dirty proposals or "left over" cosmetically reworked proposals.
11. Proposals that reflect little or no work.

Grant Strategy

1. Learn about the sources of grant funding.
2. Review your organization's mission, goals, and objectives.

3. Structure your organization for grant success.
4. Develop grant winning ideas.
5. Determine your fundability.
6. Research the field and pinpoint your most likely grant prospects.
7. Effectively manage your initial contact with a funding source.
8. Write an individually tailored proposal.
9. Follow-up after submitting the proposal.
10. Succeed in the in-person grant interview and on-site visit.
11. Deal with the decision effectively.
12. Develop continued grant support.
13. Be aware of a company's fiscal year; always try to apply at the start of their fiscal year when revenue is available.

Grant Research Tool: A List Of Resources

U.S. Government

- ❖ Catalog of Federal Assistance
- ❖ Federal Register and Index
- ❖ Agency newsletters and news releases
- ❖ Federal Grants and Contracts Weekly
- ❖ Special Grants Newsletters

Foundations

- ❖ The Foundation Directory
- ❖ The Foundation Grants Index
- ❖ Foundation Center Source Book Profiles
- ❖ Foundation Center National Data Books
- ❖ I.R.S. returns
- ❖ Annual Reports
- ❖ Chronicle of Philanthropy

Corporations

- ❖ Forbes (Market "500")
- ❖ Forbes 500 Directory
- ❖ Standard and Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors, and Executives
- ❖ National Directory of Corporate Giving
- ❖ Chamber of Commerce
- ❖ Mailing lists of specific corporations you're interested in.

Recruiting Swimmers

Feeder programs are the key to developing a successful swim club! Inner-city youth migrate toward recreation centers, housing project recreation programs, churches, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, Salvation Army, etc. Public schools are a gold mine of potential.

Select a population and target it for recruitment and development. For years, the underrepresented have had high mortality rates from drowning. This may very well be due to a lack of interest in swimming itself. Annual American Red Cross statistics show staggering drowning rates nationwide.

Many of these drownings occur within five feet of land. It becomes much easier to sell a learn-to-swim program to parents with these kinds of facts.

Offering your pool and staff for programs for the general community builds support for your program and is an excellent recruiting tool. Be creative:

- ❖ Churches are often looking for places for baptisms.
- ❖ Scouting troops need water for merit badges.
- ❖ Many day camp and day care programs don't have access to water for participants and would welcome your assistance.
- ❖ Invite neighborhood public schools in for a day or a week.
- ❖ Run free (or minimal cost) family night swims.
- ❖ Reach out to senior citizens for water aerobics. Grandparents are often some of the best recruiters around.
- ❖ Classroom visits to speak and pass out fliers are popular as well.

Another excellent place to look is the NCAA National Youth Sports Program (NYSP). This is a five-week summer camp program run at approximately 170

colleges and universities around the country. The program is specifically geared toward underrepresented and /or economically disadvantaged youth. In order to receive funding from the NCAA, each site must run a learn-to-swim program. If your community has such a program, get involved in the aquatic component. It is an untapped resource for recruiting Outreach swimmers while providing a wonderful service opportunity for you and your team.

Ideas For Reaching Parents

1. Approach public school children by offering learn-to-swim classes and/or lifeguard training. If possible these classes should be offered for free. They can be taught by some of your senior swimmers. The classes should be short in duration and held before or after club swim sessions (if you use the facility). Teaching lessons or lifeguarding can be the first employment opportunity for many of these children.
2. While these classes are in session, a small committee of parents and coaches from your club should meet with

parents and teachers in attendance and explain your program and goals.

3. Set up a Swim America Program for youngsters recruited from the free lessons.
4. New parents and prospective swimmers can be invited to an open house once a month. Coaches and seasoned parents generally run these sessions. Parents and swimmers see first hand the fun, involvement and hard work of other parents and swimmers. They learn about the structure the program offers as well as other vital information.
5. Place fliers advertising your program on windshields of cars in shopping centers, beauty parlors and recreation centers that don't have pools. Gear the information on your fliers towards parents.
6. Work with your local American Red Cross chapter for information on swim classes.

Educating Parents

Educating parents about the value of swimming is a major component in many successful Outreach programs. Parental involvement, cooperation

and support are needed. In most underrepresented and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, you will not have the luxury of recruiting young people who can swim. Therefore, you must not only be prepared to teach skills, but to develop an interest in the sport. You must lead by example in order to compete with what are called the "neon sports" like basketball and football. Look for a role model: someone who has achieved swimming goals or someone that the community can relate to.

The "open house" idea (see #4 above) is one of the best ways to reach and educate parents. Listed below are some ideas and/or topics to include during the open house:

- ❖ Distribute club newsletter at these meetings. Make sure it contains pertinent information concerning the team such as upcoming meets, birthdays, alumni column, fund-raisers, future goals, etc.
- ❖ Encourage and generate discussion around team structure (an explanation of team levels)
- ❖ Team philosophy

- ❖ Coaching staff background
- ❖ Nutritional information
- ❖ Financial cost and scholarship information. For this population it is very beneficial to stress the possibility of scholarships for higher education as well as job possibilities (lifeguarding, swim instruction, and coaching).
- ❖ USA Swimming and its benefits.

A registration form is an important tool. If parents are not immediately interested, you should place them on the team's mailing list. (Maybe soccer was not that much fun after all!) It is recommended to try to keep families on your mailing list for at least a year. It is interesting to note that, even among the most affluent populations, USA Swimming has a retention rate of only 50%. Among inner-city populations, the retention rate is much lower. An important thing to remember is to allow youngsters an opportunity to try swimming. If they drop out, it is possible they will come back again and it is important they know you want them back. Try to get as many names and addresses as possible and send swimmers invitations to start at the beginning of each season. When building

numbers, you must maintain an open door policy so youngsters can join anytime during the season.

Raising Funds

The first requirement to successful financial support of an Outreach Program is to believe very strongly and completely in what you are doing. Only then can you expect the community to support your efforts. The basic question one must ask is "Why would someone give me money?" Some of your answers might be "Swimming is great! Kids are great! Health and fitness are great! It is a great way for kids to have fun! Swimming knowledge can help prevent accidents and drownings!" Who would speak against these things? No one would, but in the difficult fiscal climate surrounding many youth and recreational youth programs those answers are not enough. The reality is that fundraising is a constant, difficult and often unpleasant task. The seemingly self-evident reality of joyfully developing youngsters, who swim up and down a pool every day, is not enough.

Swimming in age group programs is about social change. It is about affecting change in our society through the lives of young people. That "story" of individual human success against the obstacles of our

society and culture must be identified, displayed, and communicated (in five minutes or less if necessary) without losing its impact. It must be documented and "packaged" with consummate skill. It is said a picture is worth a thousand words. That is an old expression, uttered long before digital cameras, videotape, computer graphic layout or even color film!

Principle One: “A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words”

You have a great story to tell. Start recording it skillfully, consciously and systematically. Skillfully means using a student of photography or a retired professional parent who is willing to donate his time; one who can take close-ups and quality pictures in poor lighting. Nothing jumps out at a tired proposal reviewer like good photos.

Conversely, do not be resigned to be just “one of the crowd” with disposable camera quality 4 x 6 inch pictures. One never knows what “buttons” will need to be pushed. Photograph little kids, big kids, girls, boys, coaches at work, community involvement, etc. It is better to be well prepared, rather than left thinking, “I wish we had a picture of that...”

Principle Two: It’s About Emotions - Theirs And Yours

Behind every fundraising source (whether government, private, public, corporate or individual) is an individual who says, “I believe in you/your program.” Facts support their emotional commitment. It’s not about making a donor feel “good” or “important”, but about making them feel the work they do (allocating resources) creates special

value for specific people, including themselves. Donor connections are first and foremost relationships. A percentage of every dollar given by a donor must be reallocated back to maintain the relationship, to tighten the emotional knot that binds you to them.

Most people you will approach will know little, if anything, about swimming. If they do, more than likely, they already have an interest in helping you. They will, however, know about sports, or young people or a generality related to swimming. Do not spend even five minutes of time explaining your program, giving background on some championship meet or talking about your glorious, personal successes that you may have worked twenty years of your life to achieve. What is important to you may be of limited value to anyone else. Find fulfillment of your emotional needs for personal recognition elsewhere, not in the funding process.

Principle Three: Keep It Simple

Your most important document is a funder packet with a customized cover letter format. Consider a double pocket folder with the following:

- Left side: A customized cover letter and a team brochure. Team handbooks should be reserved for a supplemental information packet. Remember that the potential sponsor may never have been on a team.
- Right side: A one page competitive highlights sheet that is free of swimming jargon. Five simple sentences will do nicely. A one-sheet document containing parent or local notables’ testimonial to the dramatic difference team participation has made in their children’s lives. Also include one or two pieces from the local media. Make sure articles are current and well written. Do not provide more than two articles. Enlarge the ones you use and ensure the copy is of good quality.
- Include one or two photos (5x7 or 8x10) that capture the essence of what the team is all about. Avoid action shots. Splashy swim photos look like gator fights unless they are professionally done. Look for good smiling faces, a range of ages and coaches in close contact with attentive athletes.

**If you have a videotape, offer it in the letter but let the donor ask for it. Poorly produced videos do not have to be apologized for if the potential funder asks you for it.

Create a supplemental packet with everything the team has done as a back-up resource. However, understand if the supplemental packet is not requested, you have already reached donor review saturation levels with the above-mentioned materials.

Principle Four: “Do Not Use A Cannon To Kill A Mosquito”

Skillfully done, a quality, low-tech packet will still cost about \$2.00 each plus clerical costs. Use your materials carefully. First establish, with prior research, that the donor is in some way interested in your solicitation. ALWAYS make sure names are spelled correctly, job titles are correct, and you have contacted the appropriate person. Shredding rooms are full of proposals that ended up on the wrong desk or in the department where the budget just got cut. It is crucial your information gets properly forwarded to the “appropriate” department if your first contact was not the correct person to hear your proposal.

The average return for scattershot mass appeals is 26%. That could end up being a lot of \$2.00 packets. Send material only after a contact has been checked out and you can follow up in person. The “what can it hurt?” or the “Have we left anyone out?” philosophy of mass distribution fundraising is a myth. Do not continually look for the Mother Lode out there because most likely it does not exist. The discovery of any hidden diamond contacts is “10% inspiration and 90% perspiration.”

Principle Five: “To Find The Source Of A Great River, First You Follow The Little Streams”

Every coach and parent is connected to someone. Even kids have contacts such as teachers, uncles, cousins and second cousins. Never overlook the accumulation of small donations from minor businesses that have a family relationship to the team, even if it is removed by ninety-five generations. Donors also look for programs that have tapped their full internal potential before going to outside sources.

For example, Uncle Joe has a dry-cleaning establishment of only 1000 square feet next to a 7-11 store. He is connected to a higher network of suppliers, regular customers and the 7-11 manager next door. The “seamless web” analogy may be a bit much, but get in that mindset and regularly ask questions. People do not often think of how they are connected to other people. When is the last time you thought of a particular cousin? People are generous to a fault when they give to young relatives doing positive things with their lives.

Principle Six: Swimming Saves Lives

Know how to swim and chances are you won't drown. It doesn't matter if you are from Park Avenue or the park bench, from the White House or the doghouse. Take young people from a poor neighborhood, troubled families or schools and place them in a supportive, surrogate family-swim club environment with solid adult role models and peers who value achievement and education, and you are literally saving their lives.

Young African-American males will die of firearms related causes, above all others, before the age of 21. Put them in the water and you have literally taken them out of the line of fire. Sports can be used as an intervention. Take a child off the streets and put them into a productive, meaningful educational program for two hours a day and they have two less hours to do something destructive with their lives. About 75% of young people's time in the non-school hours is discretionary and unsupervised. Intervention through sports can reduce crime and pregnancy rates among youth. Involvement of young people in sports produces multiple benefits. At their best, sport programs

promote responsible social behaviors, greater academic success, confidence in one's physical abilities, appreciation of personal health and fitness, and strong social bonds with individuals and institutions. Here are some essential requirements for setting young adolescents on the pathway to effective adulthood. Ideally all adolescents must:

- ❖ Find a valued place in a constructive group.
- ❖ Learn how to form close durable human relationships.
- ❖ Feel a sense of worth as a person.
- ❖ Find a reliable basis for making informed, deliberate decisions especially on matters of large consequence, such as educational futures.
- ❖ Know how to use available support systems.
- ❖ Find ways of being useful to others beyond the self.
- ❖ Believe in a promising future with real opportunities.
- ❖ Cultivate the inquiring and problem-solving habits of mind for lifelong learning and adaptability.
- ❖ Learn respect for democratic values and understand responsible citizenship.
- ❖ Build a healthy lifestyle.

In order to offer these learning opportunities to youth most in need, we must

address the barriers that prevent these programs from reaching them. They include limited sport facilities, lack of transportation, the location of sports facilities in gang infested, unsafe parts of town, and cultural attitudes and conflicts between children of different cultures and religions.

Outreach programs deserve special attention because they create a more profound and deeply engaged level of contact with the young people they serve. No swim program really saves anyone by itself. It can, though, be the linchpin in an environment of stability in a young person's life. Contrast this with the environment of instability that co-exists and competes in many communities.

If all of this sounds very sociological, it is and it needs to be documented. Do kids really do better in school if they are swimmers? Where is the data? Does swimming open up college scholarship opportunities for the Outreach population? Where is the data? Of course, USA Swimming has some of the data and Harvard type professors have testified before Congress, but where is the specific data for your community? This

is your responsibility to assess.

The reason for all of this is two-fold. One is political and public relations oriented. “Midnight basketball” leagues and other recreational programs are pawns in political struggles. Crime and violence prevention are not. They are visceral issues to all ideological backgrounds. If participants molded themselves into the leadership group of a national coalition, this coalition could have the mission of mobilizing youth to participate in sports and advocating for increased sports program budgets. It would prod citizens into becoming volunteers in youth sports programs, prod municipalities into getting money for sports back into schools, prod principals and school councils into launching after-school sports programs, prod the National Collegiate Athletic Association into investing money in grassroots sports organizations, and prod the President of the United States into talking about sports and youth development to reduce crime and gang problems.

Foundations could provide a scouting mechanism, an independent, high quality review panel. Foundations could also strengthen existing surveys of research on sports and youth

development. They could identify major gaps and the most urgent needs that have a practical significance. They could determine how to fill such gaps, for example, by providing evidence on the relation of sports to education and health outcomes. They could evaluate the conditions under which sports activity and sports organizations are associated with desirable educational outcomes. Foundations can help to generate social pressure by supporting advocacy organizations that pay more serious attention to sports and youth development. The second reason, regrettably but understandably, is corporate donors are deeply influenced by the culture in which they live. Bill Gates is going to give away most of his money (or so he says) and he wants tangible and quantifiable results “from all this generosity”. You must always think of what you are going to give back in tangible and quantifiable terms.

Anyone who works with children knows their development is a deeply qualitative phenomena. Do you feel as if you fit round pegs into square holes? You do and you need to be good at it. Remember that you are not fitting a real kid into a real hole. It’s a mutually agreed upon fiction you must create with a

public or politically dependent donor. Better have a good relationship if you ever expect to salvage any intellectual or ethical integrity out of the process. Kids swimming = less violence = their lives saved or kids swimming = less crime = your lives saved. Simple, gut-felt and sound bite friendly. Now you could probably make a case in less than five minutes.

Monitor your local newspaper for items that could be relevant to your program. The newspaper will always raise different topics that could be opportunity for your program. There are always stories about local personalities who are active in different causes. Why can’t they be active with yours? The paper always publishes information about money that might be available to the community. The information about local meetings in your town is published as well. Observe those meetings and investigate their relevance to your program.

Who Should Reach Out? How Important Is It To Be Underrepresented?

Know your population. You can study the population you want to service through the census report

for your city. Contact your Chamber of Commerce. They will be able to provide all the needed information. You can get a breakdown of information by council district. Information that can be obtained includes: statistics on population, average household income, poverty rate, crime rate, etc. Information of this nature can be critical in obtaining support from other organizations.

Probably the most important thing is not to be authoritative. When you approach families or children about joining your program tell them the benefits of the program, the lifetime values they will receive. Do not treat them as under-represented or under-privileged but as human beings. Remember that their socioeconomic standing does not affect their ambitions or dreams. Their standing simply is another barrier to overcome to reach those goals.

Do your homework and find some of your community leaders within the underrepresented community. Get them to help you bridge the gap. The first place to start is with your local politicians, common council members, legislators, etc. These people are very influential in organizing others in the community and getting them involved. It is often helpful to

bring in a underrepresented role model (preferably from your own community) to be your “hero” spokesperson. Identify underrepresented swimmers from other teams and work with them and their coach to act as role models. If you have a local professional sports team in your area, attempt to contact some of the underrepresented athletes on the team. Many times they may have foundations set up to service the local community.

What Kind Of Fundraising Efforts Have Proven Successful?

Swim meets, raffles, candy sales, car washes, etc. are all effective methods of raising funds. However, it is important to remember that Outreach programs serve economically disadvantaged areas and proceeds from traditional funding sources may fall short of necessary goals.

As discussed above, direct solicitations for support are generally more effective for Outreach programs. Again, it is important to know your community. Often neighborhood merchants are willing to sponsor a swimmer or adopt a swimmer. When using this type of solicitation, be sure to provide each sponsor with information on the swimmer with regular updates, free advertising in

meet programs, and an invitation to team banquets.

Grant money is sometimes also available for funding Outreach programs. This is especially true if you have a relationship with a central sponsoring agency (YMCA, YWCA, CYO, Girls and Boys Club, etc.). It is much more effective if the sponsoring agency applies for the grant. One excellent example is the San Antonio Sports Foundation, in partnership with the United States Olympic Committee. Together they sponsor a program called Dreams for Youth. This program reaches out to inner city housing project children in an attempt to get them involved in swimming, diving, cycling, fencing and badminton.

Successful Outreach programs become very creative in their search for swimmer support. It is not enough to raise money to offset coaching fees. Swimmers also need equipment and travel money. Lost and found boxes are a source of top condition equipment for Outreach swimmers. One team has named this effort the “Robin Hood” project and local merchants are more than happy to help with donations.

Several communities have organized collaborative programs with city parks and recreation departments. Most parks and recreation departments run some sort of learn-to-swim and/or entry level competitive swim team program. These tend to be seasonal and often take place in the summer. Some USA Swimming teams that rent city water have offered to coach inner-city swimmers for free in exchange for a reduction in water fees. For each month an Outreach swimmer remains on the team, the city reduces the monthly water rental by whatever the coaching fees are for that swimmer. This becomes a win-win situation and everyone benefits!

A final note. There is a new paradigm in all this: “the coach is more than a coach.” We have asked a swim team coach to be part art director, part sociologist, part salesman, part politician and part visionary. “Where’s the swimming?” you ask. The old “swim coach as only swim coach” model is as “dead as the dinosaurs.” The new coach must be as good a manager as he/she is a coach, maybe even better. No one can do all these jobs, nor will anyone, unless empowered to do so. The more you want to coach the more you must delegate. Today, it’s “your program” only if you own it. If you are reading this to raise money,

then you probably don’t own it and never will. “We” will own the team and “we” must work as a team.

Guidelines To Developing Pluralism And Eliminating Prejudice*

1. Recognize your own beliefs, attitudes and behaviors toward members of one’s own and other racial, ethnic and cultural groups and act as a positive role model. All efforts at breaking down barriers and increasing sensitivity towards diversity are useless if swimmers hear a disparaging remark about a particular group or if they overhear an ethnic joke. Also, be aware of and sensitive to lack of knowledge, interaction and communication with members of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.
2. Demonstrate sincere respect for the traditions, customs, lifestyles, and values of different racial, ethnic, cultural and religious groups. Make it clear when ones own personal beliefs and opinions are being expressed. Be sure swimmers understand that this viewpoint is one of many held on this issue.

3. Help swimmers recognize generalizations, stereotypes, and omissions in the media, literature, and depiction of swimming events. Recognize that information widely accepted as “factual” may be incorrect.
4. Encourage feelings of pride in a swimmer’s own heritage and background by giving swimmers opportunities to express their pride and learn more about themselves. Praise and encourage expressions and behavior in swimmers that demonstrate respect for others.
5. Make sure your athletes, coaches and parents are fully aware that prejudice and racism are totally unacceptable, whether in behavior, expressions, or attitudes.
6. Help swimmers see themselves as part of a larger society and help them develop a sense of social responsibility and concern that extends beyond one’s own family or group.

Specific Issues And Suggested Remedies

A first rule of thumb is “Don’t get too specific. You can create more problems than you solve.” Sometimes things that are left unsaid are best. You know your team and its member’s best. If you anticipate problems or suspect some already exist, it is often a good idea to talk to the Outreach athletes directly and privately. Gently warn them that something might happen and instruct them in the way that you want them to react.

The tampon issue has presented itself as a problem in teams with numbers of Hispanic female athletes. Many Hispanic families feel that use of a tampon destroys virginity. Therefore, menstruating girls who will not use tampons often miss practice and meets. There has been some success using adult women to come in and talk to female swimmers and their parents about training in general. Use an educational approach to persuade your girls that they do not have to stop swimming during menstruation.

African-American adolescent females present problems related to their hair. Other than cutting hair in a short style, not much else is available that we know of. The Outreach

Committee is presently negotiating with a cosmetic company to research this problem and, hopefully develop some hair care products specifically geared for African- American swimmers.

Perhaps one of the most serious sensitivity issues is that of female body image. The idea of developing muscles is not appealing to many adolescents (not just the Outreach community).

USA Swimming is sensitive to this issue and is committed to producing posters and other publicity material showing all types of sizes, shapes, and colors. There are some posters available currently and these can be prominently displayed at your pool. The average weight of a female college swimmer today is 150 pounds.

If there is a college or university in your community it might be helpful to find and ask some of those athletes to be mentors for your younger girls. The collegiate swimmer has “been there and done that” and can share solutions with your age group swimmers. If you do not have access to college swimmers, use your senior girls to mentor your younger girls. Remember to start your mentor program early with girls; they have an early performance peak

because they mature earlier than boys do.

** Much of this section is reprinted with permission from Promoting Positive Pluralistic Attitudes Among Girls.*

Sensitivity Issues

As USA Swimming takes up the challenge of programming for under-represented and/or economically disadvantaged athletes and their coaches, local swim teams have the most important role to play. Prejudice of any kind cannot be tolerated! Research suggests that people with high levels of self-esteem are less prejudiced, more open-minded, and less likely to blame others for their problems. Research also shows that swimming builds self-esteem. It is very hard to value other people if you don’t value yourself. On the other hand, excessive emphasis on competition can often be harmful to self-esteem.

The balance between these two seemingly opposing forces needs to be addressed for all swimmers, but special efforts in this area should be made with the Outreach population. At all times, coaches and other team personnel should encourage respect and show appreciation for the diversity of others.

Regardless of the cause, conflict of one sort or another is inevitable. Conflict is not always negative. Conflict can help children and adults grow- emotionally, intellectually, and socially. Not knowing how to deal with conflict constructively is negative and destructive. Positive ways to effectively deal with conflict can be taught. One of the goals of any sound swim team program should be relating to others. Swimmers can benefit from their team experience by:

1. Relating to others with increasing understanding, skill and respect.
2. Developing sensitivity to others and respect for their needs, feelings and rights.
3. Promoting understanding and appreciation of individual, cultural, religious and racial differences.
4. Promoting the ability to build friendships and working relationships.

Swimmers look to the adults involved in the sport as positive role models whose behavior contradicts any negative messages they have received. It is the hope of the Outreach Committee that promoting positive pluralistic attitudes among our athletes will begin with each of us.