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Shannon:

The YMCA focuses on 4 core values: caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility. To me respect is central to these pillars. We are all taught the Golden Rule of treat others how you want to be treated and to have the responsibility to show courtesy, consideration, and thoughtfulness. However, we have to respect ourselves to be able to respect others. Respect begins by taking responsibility for our actions and not blaming others for the choices and decisions we make. From a quote by Eleanor Roosevelt, she said, "in the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility."

At my Y, we have a tradition at our first meet of the season, called the "Big Brother/Big Sister Meet" which has taught me respect and responsibility since a young age. At this meet, the older swimmers, or big brothers/sisters, help guide the younger, new swimmers on how a swim meet is run. When I was a "little sister" I had to learn to respect my teammates, coaches, parents, and officials and also learn to be responsible for getting ready for my events. Today, now being a "big sister" it has become my responsibility to pass on and to help teach the younger swimmers respect for themselves and everyone else. This is my eighth nationals and I feel it is my responsibility to help guide the rookies at their first nationals. I hope they will follow my lead as I have followed the example set by older swimmers who have taken responsibility for how they perform and show respect to everyone that has helped them get here.

We pray for the strength to take responsibility for our actions and pray to have the insight to respect ourselves and others. Amen.

Susie:

As growing up swimming for the YMCA, I've realized how special this league is. With being part of the YMCA, we get to learn and reflect the YMCA Core Values which are: Caring, Honesty, Respect and Responsibility.

The first is caring and it's more than just being nice to everyone, caring is about getting your teammates pumped up for their races, and of course getting ready for relays. It's cheering for your teammates on the good races, and it's about being there for them on the not so good races. It's about picking them up after what may be their worst race of the week. We've all been there, and we all know it's better to have a caring teammate there to help you move on and focus on your next race. Caring is not only about the teammates, it's about the coaches. Coaches devote their time and energy to us swimmers to make us better. They want to see us succeed, and without them, it would be really hard. Coaches are the ones who motivate us to go faster. Everyone on a team, the coaches, the other swimmers, and even the parents care about each one of us.

The second is Honesty and it may be the hardest value to live out, I know it is for me. Honesty doesn't just mean telling the truth, it means that we have to know that we swam our best, pushed our hardest, and gave it everything we had. It means that after having a bad race, we can't blame the coach, we can't blame the pool, we can't blame having a bad lane, we can't blame the suit. We have to know that it was us, and we have to truly critique ourselves and know what we can do better the next time. We do this so we can be our best. We must also be honest outside of swimming as well. Honesty outside of the pool will build character. We want to be people who aren't just good at swimming, we

want to be people with good hearts as well. We've always been told that honesty is the best policy, and some people may roll their eyes at that, but in reality it's true. With honesty comes many other great qualities such as loyalty, happiness, and most importantly success.

Prayer:

Please bow your heads.

Dear God,

As we gather here tonight and the rest of the week may you bless and watch over the swimmers, coaches, officials, and parents. May the swimmers compete with your love shining in their heart. May they push themselves to their highest potential. May they have the strength, endurance, and skills needed to be the athlete they know they can be. May the coaches inspire and help the swimmers achieve success. May the officials make the right calls, and perform their duties to the best of their abilities, and may the parents continue to help their children grow with love and support. We thank you, in Your Name, Amen.