

Lexi Rauth – 2016 Short Course YMCA Nationals Devotion

Good evening everyone and welcome to what to me is one of the best swim meets in the country, YMCA Nationals. I am honored to be here today representing my team and teams from all over the country. After many years of cheering for my older brother and sister as a spectator in the stands, to the 5th year of swimming here as an athlete myself, my time at YMCA Nationals is quickly coming to an end. I am grateful I have been given the privilege of addressing you all tonight, and it is my hope that my words will get you excited for the week of swimming ahead, and inspire you to use what you all have learned from YMCA swimming, to make a difference in the world around you.



For me to say that YMCA swimming has been an integral part of my life would be an understatement. For 16 years, my family has been a part of YMCA swimming, and for the past 10 years, they have been attending YMCA National meets. (In fact I think my dad has officiated every one of them!) I grew up learning the YMCA way, and as I began to reflect on all those years of experiences, I realized I would not be the swimmer, athlete, student or person I am today were it not for the influence of the YMCA. Our core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility make for a strong foundation for all of us to live by.

The importance and value of these core values were never more apparent to me than when tragedy struck the Upper Main Line YMCA swim team. Four years ago our team lost an amazing, bright, spirited, inspirational, yellow-jammer wearing young man to leukemia at the age of 14. Cameron Evans was a swimmer and cross country runner that I had the privilege of knowing personally and was able to call my best friend. Despite a bravely fought battle, Cameron passed away after just 6 months.

Not only was the outpouring of care and support for Cameron's family indescribable during the immediate aftermath of his passing, but because my YMCA family had also learned the YMCA core value of responsibility, they looked beyond the tragedy and asked "What can we as swimmers do to prevent others from experiencing what our teammate Cameron did?" My YMCA swimming family has been amazing, as all 200 swimmers have come together each year to compete in a "Relays 4 Cam" swimming event to raise money for childhood cancer research. Because we cared about what happened to Cameron and his family, because we're not afraid to take responsibility for making a difference in the world, because we respected the fact that we can make a difference, and because we were honest with ourselves about the talents we did have, our team has raised over \$17,000 so far, all of which has gone to childhood cancer research. Our team has taken those YMCA core values even farther, and through our work with other teams, swimmers have raised over \$60,000 to cure kids' cancer. My teammates and I have learned the power of

inspiration, volunteerism and we have learned we can make a difference all while relying on those 4 core values we learned so long ago.

So as you compete this week, I ask you to not just think about your races and your teammates and the fun you'll having here. Yes, those are important, but please don't forget to think beyond this amazing meet. Think about the privilege you have had being a part of the YMCA family, and think about the core values the YMCA has taught you. I challenge each person here today to use those core values that are embedded within you, and go make a difference in the world, beyond the pool deck. What will you do to change the world and make it a better place? Take something you love, a talent of yours, and use it to change the world. YMCA swimming has given you the foundation...now what will you do with it?

The Upper Main Line YMCA swim team is wearing our favorite yellow shirts tonight, our teammate Cameron's favorite color. We wear them with pride. Our yellow shirts are bright and cheerful like Cameron was, but more importantly, they remind us that we are more than swimmers. We know the value of caring, honesty, respect, and responsibility, and we have accepted the challenge of making a difference in this world! So thank you YMCA swimming, for instilling in us, such important lessons, and teaching us to be great people and not just great swimmers. Best of luck to everyone here this week!!!

And now, please join me in prayer, Our father, thank you for the privilege of being a YMCA swimmer. Please help each of us realize our potential both in and out of the pool, and give us the strength and guidance to live everyday honestly, respectfully, responsibly and with care. In your name we pray, Amen