

Good evening everyone, my name is Abbey Berloco and I am from the Hamilton Area YMCA in New Jersey. I would like to begin today by recognizing a very important person in my YMCA swimming career: my coach, Sue Welch.

For those of you who do not have the privilege of knowing Coach Sue, let me introduce you. Sue has been the head coach of the Hamilton Area YMCA swim team for the past 35 years. Building it from the ground up, the team of now over 100 swimmers began as a summer league team that still exists today. She has coached athletes of all levels stressing her mantra that hard work leads to success. Through this, Sue has trained state title holders, YMCA national champions, and even olympic trials qualifiers.

One of Sue's main goals as our coach is to guide us in reaching our highest potential. Through constructive criticism and unwavering motivation, she challenges us to achieve things we ourselves did not know were possible. However, we are reminded that although swimming should be taken seriously, at the end of the day it also should be something that we enjoy.

Sue is not only an established coach, but much more, she is a wife, mother, teacher, and friend. She is the perfect example of living out the YMCA core values of respect, responsibility, honesty, and caring. To our team, Sue is like a second mother. Someone who is always there for you during your best and worst moments. Her kind and generous nature not only encourages us to attend practice each night, but inspires us all to become better people in the process. Sue stresses inclusion and camaraderie which has brought together a team of so many unique individuals and personalities over the years. Together, with Sue's help, our team has become one cohesive group as she encourages us to embrace our individuality and celebrate our differences. To her there is more that we should learn during our time on H-A-C-Y than just technique and fast swimming. We should walk away from HAC knowing how to be a hard worker, leader, and teammate.

Now as a graduated senior, I fondly reminisce over the laughs, hugs, and even grueling practices shared with Coach Sue. Although I know that I will come across many amazing coaches as I continue to swim at the collegiate level, my relationship with Sue will always remain special. As I move forward onto this next phase in my life, I look back and am honored and humbled to have been able to call her my coach for the past six years.

I ask you all to take the time over these next few days to thank your coaches for all that they do. Without them we would not be where we are now. They have shaped us not only as swimmers, but as people.

Now please bow your heads in prayer.

God, thank you for blessing us with the opportunity to be here surrounded by those we love. Please give us strength and courage as we compete and guide us towards grace and humbleness. Allow us to accept the things that we cannot control and embrace those that we can. In your name we pray. Amen.



