

Good evening everyone and welcome to Wednesday night finals. My name is Meredith Riegler and I am here representing the Somerset Hills YMCA in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. Although SHY is the only team I have represented at Y-Nationals, I have been a part of a few other Y teams: my first team was the Powel Crosley Jr, YMCA, then I swam for the Chapel Hill YMCA for 7 years, and I even swam on YOTA for just a short long course season before I moved to New Jersey. But no matter the amount of time I spent at each Y, my life has been greatly impacted. I have learned so many valuable lessons from the time that I was about 5 or 6 to 17. I have met the best people, and swimming with them is a privilege. The coaches that coached me have also had an amazing impact on who I aspire to become.

In the span of 12 years, I fell in love with swimming and the YMCA. But if I was told back when I was 6 that the Y would have a huge influence on me and how I see swimming, I probably wouldn't have believed it. Now, at my last short course nationals, it's amazing how true that statement is. In all honesty, you won't know how much something means to you until your time is almost done.

One of the most significant things that I have learned in the last 4 years however is that a meet like this is one of a kind. Everything that happens at a Y-Nationals is certainly something that can't be replicated and it is undeniably incredible. My favorite thing is seeing all the different YMCAs from all over the country come together and swim in a competition but also unite as one. And one thing my mom always says to me before every Y-Nationals is to soak in the environment. Be in the moment. Have fun and just swim. The environment the YMCA creates at this meet and in general is something so great for everyone involved and my advice to everyone here, is to soak it in and enjoy every second. Enjoy being at the Y surrounded by all the amazing staff, volunteers, other members, the many different teammates, and the coaches that you will have.

I am certain that I will forever cherish the memories I have created surrounded by the best people I know, because they will last a lifetime, and I hope my fellow athletes here will do the same because it's an incredible feeling to be surrounded by people that are this amazing. And to my fellow athletes, good luck to all of you with the rest of the meet, and have fun while you're here because before you know it, it will be over.

Now, please join me in bowing your heads in prayer: Dear Lord, we take this moment to thank you for leading us to this point and bringing the values of the YMCA into our lives. Thank you for the guidance you have given to us to demonstrate not only our purpose but also our passion and our appreciation for the sport. Thank you for the endless motivation and love that the YMCA provides for every single one of us. Without that, we

wouldn't know where our paths would take us. Please be with us and give us strength and knowledge of what we are capable of doing the rest of the week. And please continue to keep us both motivated and strong-minded. Amen.