

Good morning everyone and welcome to the final day of YMCA Nationals. My name is Virginia Gilliland and I am a senior for the Greensboro Community Y. For me and many others it is not only the final day of the 2018 LC Y national meet, but also the final day of our last Y Swimming event. This is my ninth Y nationals and it is weird to think that it is my last; however, I am truly grateful for the memories I have with Y Swimming and especially those at this meet.

When I tell my friends who are not swimmers that I'm leaving for Y Nats, I often times describe it as the "disneyland of swim meets." This meet is like no other. There is a feeling on deck unique to YNATs, one that my teammates and I look forward to every year. The sense of belonging on deck- exhibited through the parade to start things off, and then continued through a shared drive for each other to succeed is something I cherish every time I come to this meet. I often times find myself walking around and waving to familiar faces that I have gotten to know over the years and through other opportunities like leadership camp that I have had because of YNATS. My teammates and I always have the best time forming a bond with one another throughout the week, starting even before we board the bus as we get together to make costumes for the parade. Then throughout the meet with team tradition- which for gcy means mario kart championships, numerous rounds of our favorite card game, kemps, and competing in Coach Brad's favorite: GCY Trivia.

The spirit exemplified through YNATs is a culmination of the many hours of practice and hard work we have put in throughout the year to get to get to this point. We've come together during test sets, dry land sessions, and training trips, motivating each other to reach our full potential, and cheering each other on at meets until our voice goes out. These actions as a team throughout the year are one of the main reasons we have been able to accomplish what we have, including attending Y Nationals. In addition to the support system we create as teammates, our coaches play a huge role in helping us reach where we are. Thank you to our coaches for not only teaching us skills from the sport of swimming, but for acting as mentors who taught us lessons about life and perspective. I'd like to say thank you to Coach Brad and the rest of the GCY coaching staff for helping me develop into who I am, and to my friends for the never ending laughs and words of advice. Additionally, thank you to the parents and volunteers- hey, mama christine you especially, for traveling countless hours and offering support no matter what.

I challenge each one of you to thank your coaches and tell your teammates that you appreciate them. Good luck to everyone competing today! As we say back in Greensboro: Last one, fast one.

Please join me in prayer,

Dear lord, thank you for giving us the opportunity to attend YNats and compete with one another. Thank you for granting us with a support system of friends and for coaches who believe in us and help us reach our full potential. Please be with us on this final day as we continue to create memories and give us the power to finish strong.

In Jesus name we pray, Amen.