

2011 Joseph G. Rogers Award

For Long and Exceptional Leadership and Accomplishments in YMCA
Competitive Swimming Benefiting all Swimmers, Coaches, Parents, and Volunteers



Bettie L. Williams

Bettie Williams became involved in Y swimming as many parents do, when her 3 year old son Marcus registered for swimming lessons. The following year, Marcus was recruited to swim with the 28th Street Y "Marlins" in Los Angeles. The Marlins, founded by a local high school science teacher and volunteer coach named Walter "Hutch" Hutchinson, practiced in a fifteen yard, four-lane pool.

The 28th Street Y offered the first African American swim program in Los Angeles. As a single mom, Bettie wanted to make sure that Marcus learned to swim as she never had this opportunity. Not being one to stay in the stands, she offered her time volunteering for the swim program, initially as the swim meet score keeper. Bettie also shuttled the swimmers to meets, sometimes making two and three trips as there was limited parental help and no resources to rent transportation.

Swimming was a challenge for Bettie on many fronts, primarily because there were few African American swimmers. Not only was Marcus the only one of his peers who swam, but none of Bettie's friends nor colleagues understood the interest that Bettie and Marcus had for the sport. Marcus's circle of swimming friends continued to increase, and as his accomplishments grew, his talent prompted Bettie to search for a more competitive program. Bettie focused on the surrounding Ys since she felt very comfortable in the friendly confines of the Y culture. The result of her search was the San Pedro Peninsula Y.

Marcus swam competitively at the San Pedro Peninsula Y until his high school graduation. His swimming career culminated with his participation in Y Short Course Nationals in 1991 and 1992. While Marcus was swimming, Bettie continued volunteering her time. Soon Bettie was totally immersed in the Y, even serving as a team leader for the Annual Campaign. On the wet front, Bettie always visibly helped out on deck, while behind the scenes served in every board officer position with the San Pedro Y Swim Team Parents Association. Even today, sixteen years after Marcus finished swimming for the San Pedro Y, Bettie serves as the current Swim Team Board Vice-Chair.

Bettie has volunteered on many fronts in swimming including eight years as the Executive Director of the Southern California Y Swim league, and the same tenure as Western US Group Representative for Y competitive swimming. Currently Bettie serves as the Y Long Course Meet Director after serving as the assistant meet director for a number of years.

Bettie was awarded the Conoco Phillips Volunteer Service Award from Southern California Swimming in 2009. She served as a Senior Administrative Referee for Southern California Swimming and held a position on the SCS Peer Review Board.

Bettie was recognized for her volunteer efforts in Los Angeles by receiving the 2004 Spirit Award for Women in Sports from the LA84 Foundation for her work as the Summer Swim Coordinator for the LA84 Foundation Summer Swim Program. This program engages 9,000 to 12,000 underserved youth every summer in the four disciplines of aquatics: competitive swimming, synchronized swimming, water polo and diving. "Teach, Learn, Compete" is promoted through the program as these youngsters learn basic aquatic skills through the summer then come together to celebrate their accomplishments during various sports festivals at the end of the season.