

2013 Joseph G. Rogers Award
For Long and Exceptional Leadership and Accomplishments in YMCA
Competitive Swimming Benefiting all Swimmers, Coaches, Parents and Volunteers

Jim Everett



Jim Everett, an avid and tireless promoter of the sport of swimming, believes swimming has the power to change lives. Growing up in a single parent family, swimming became a lifeline beginning in junior high school. It provided him a place to belong, a place to burn off excess energy, and an opportunity to interact with strong male role models otherwise missing from his life. Jim's initial Y experience was as an Indian Guide, prior to his father's passing when Jim was 8 years old. Some of his fondest memories were formulated from the Indian Guide program, a program he later participated in with his own boys.

As a very casual, sporadic and not very talented young swimmer with the Birmingham, Michigan Y, Jim was always a welcome team member despite showing no potential. As a "late bloomer" in high school, Jim captained the Birmingham Seaholm Maples and attained recognition as a High School All American. He attended Albion College in Michigan and was possibly Albion's greatest swimmer. Not only was Jim elected team captain for three years, he was also awarded Most Valuable Swimmer all 4 years and was the first swimmer to be inducted into the Albion Athletic Hall of Fame.

His college years behind him, Jim coached the swim team at the Marietta Y in Ohio, and, in 1975, accompanied the first group of swimmers representing Marietta to Y Nationals. Jim's consistent mentoring of the Y core values and his unwavering belief in kids were evident, as manifested by the young swimmers' responses and achievements. One such swimmer was Betsy Mitchell who later held the World Record in the 200 meter backstroke.

Jim's Y leadership journey continued when he was hired as swim coach by the Boise Family Y. In this capacity, Jim led a dozen Boise Y swimmers and a young man from the now defunct Coeur d'Alene Y to the Y National Championships. Proudly representing Idaho in its debut appearance, the team won several events and solidified a firm foundation for a great swim program. In Jim's relatively short Y swim coaching career, he worked with four Y National champions and is most rewarded that nearly a dozen former swimmers went on to become coaches.

Jim's leadership skills reached well beyond the pool. In 1987, Jim was appointed CEO of the Boise Family Y which then had 2500 members. Under Jim's leadership, the Boise Y grew into the Treasure Valley Family Y with over 55,000 members and has raised more than \$50 million to spread the Y mission to more people, especially kids and families. Jim's devotion to swimming did not waiver. From his position of leadership, Jim was the formative force behind making swimming a high school sport where athletes could earn their varsity letter in a state that had not recognized

swimming as a sport and no school facility had a pool. He served as Meet Referee for all of the high school state meets and most of the local dual meets for more than a decade. He also recruited all of the volunteer coaches for the Treasure Valley high school teams in the first year, and one is still coaching the same team today.

Jim's vision and leadership led to a unique partnership with the city of Boise, resulting in the construction of the only indoor 50 meter aquatic facility in the state of Idaho at the West Family Y. As a trustee at College of Idaho, Jim collaborated with the athletic director to start a men's and women's swim program and helped hire the three coaches the teams have had in their first 10 years. Both teams finished in the top 15 at NAIA Nationals in 2013. Jim then met with Boise State's AD and successfully persuaded him to create a Division I women's team. Boise State's swim team holds all meets, all diving practices and some swim practices at the West Family Y. Jim has served as meet referee for every scheduled home meet since the beginning of the program, a program which now competes as a top 25 NCAA team.

Both of Jim's sons, Kevin and Travis, developed into accomplished swimmers. Jim was a swim team parent who not only cheered for his own kids, but enthusiastically supported all the swimmers. His son Kevin experienced much success; from reaching the finals at the Y Nationals, swimming at the college level where he was selected as an Academic All American as well as earning All American status, and competing on four Division II national championship teams. Today, Kevin is a professional triathlete and a full time coach, continuing a family tradition established by his father. Jim's son, Travis, has special needs and has always encountered a welcoming environment and a sense of belonging with the Boise Y swim team under Frank Burlison. Travis is a multi sport Special Olympian, coached by his father and 'Gate Guy' Joe Sr. This coaching duo also instructed six additional Special Olympic teams, with three earning division state championship honors. Travis competed at Summer Y Nationals and has been a two time national champion at US Masters Nationals.

The second great aquatic center Jim brought to the Boise community was built at the Caldwell Family Y, another area of the Boise community that had no aquatic resource. During the past 5 years this facility has introduced thousands of citizens to the joy of swimming. According to published statistics, Idaho has the 3rd most drownings per capita in the nation. To address this problem, Jim was instrumental in forming a model partnership between the Caldwell School District, USA Swimming, and the Y, a collaboration aimed at providing every third grader in the school district 10 weeks of free swim lessons.

Through the years, Jim has officiated countless swim meets and conducted numerous officials' clinics. He and his wife, Linda, have participated in the Y National Meet as a swim team parents, swim team chaperones, and Jim has served on the Y National Swimming and Diving Committee. However, of all his accomplishments and contributions, Jim is best known in the National Swimming Community as the "Gate Guy".

The development of the 'Gate Guys' evolved following a particularly un-'Y'-like Long Course meet in 1998; a situation where the meet marshals were anything but considerate towards the swimmers and spectators. Prior to the 1999 Short Course Meet, Glenda Pae asked Jim and Joe Weisser to serve as ticket takers. The chemistry between Jim and Joe was magical; the special ingredients were their love of swimming and their love for the Y. No job description defined their 'ticket taker' assignment. Having a blank slate, Jim and Joe orchestrated the 'ticket taker' duties to focus on making the Y national meet a signature youth development event that engaged both the swimmers and their friends and families. To this day, the 'Gate Guys' organize spectator dance contests, select both a Fan of the Day and a Team of the Day, initiate a spectator Frisbee toss, take part in the Slingshot Target Practice, and choose the recipient of the "10 Gallon Challenge" (a cowboy hat full of water is poured over a spectator's head). Smiles and 'high fives' are required for admission into the meet venues, and possibly a 'background check' may be in order. What is a 'background check'? The background check is a stress relieving back rubdown administered with the 'Gate Guy' certified back rubdown device.

The priority of the 'Gate Guys' is to add levity to a stressful competitive situation; to make sure that all those in attendance, including the swimmers, families and friends and have fun during the eight sessions of swimming over four days. Over time the "Gate Guys" phenomenon has evolved to include a number of characters including: John, Angie, Pink, Joe Sr. and Joe Jr., Brandon and Jaime along with Bob, the song-writer, and Stu, the harmonica player. The glue for the team, however, is Jim Everett, truly an icon in Y swimming and a model for servant leadership and the Y core values.