

2015 JOSEPH G. ROGERS AWARD
Mike Leonard



J. Michael Leonard has been working for the benefit of YMCA Swimming since he started his tenure as head coach of the Powel Crosley Jr. YMCA Tigersharks in 1986. As a coach he has grown the PCY program from a small branch team of 38 swimmers to a nationally recognized program of more than 250 team members from beginners to Masters. He has led the Tigersharks to a YMCA Men's Team National Championship and numerous top ten finishes. He was chosen by his peers as the 2001 Long Course YMCA National Championship Coach of the Meet. Mike's teams have likewise excelled in the Southwest Ohio YMCA League and the Great Lakes Zone where he has been named Coach of the Year. He is a member of the Southwest Cluster YMCA Swimming Hall of Fame and has coached national champions, national record holders and an Olympic Trials Qualifier.

Mike maintains a strong emphasis on character and personal development in this program and in YMCA Swimming as a whole. While almost 100 of his swimmers have continued their careers in the NCAA, many others have won academic and civic scholarships to attend college. Megan Darling was the recipient of the YMCA Outstanding Participant Award while swimming for PCY in 1996. She is now a coach for the Tigersharks. One former team member explained that, "Mike has a gift for encouraging people to extend themselves to do more. Swimming at PCY is an experience that is much more than just swimming."

While Mike's greatest motivation is to positively impact each swimmer, the Joseph G. Rogers Award celebrates volunteer service to YMCA Swimming as a whole. This is an area that Mike also believes in strongly. He feels that by volunteering his time, he is not only making the sport and the YMCA better for the swimmers, but he is also setting an important example. Today, many of his former swimmers are now YMCA donors, board members, coaches and community leaders in Cincinnati and around the country. They proudly follow his lead in giving back to help the community and the next generation of leaders.

Mike has served as the chair of the Southwest Ohio YMCA Swim League since 2003. He was president of the YMCA Coaches Association from 1994 to 2001 and was instrumental in the addition of time trials to the National Championship Meet format. He has twice been a member of the YMCA National Advisory Committee, from 1995 to 2002 and 2012 to present, and is the assistant meet director for the YMCA National Masters Meet. He not only serves as a volunteer in these roles, he actively recruits others to volunteer as well.

Mike's commitment to YMCA Swimming at the national level has led to his inclusion in site selection for the national championship meets. He has also represented YMCA Swimming on numerous occasions before the City of Fort Lauderdale Commissioners regarding the rebuilding of the Aquatic Complex where YMCA Nationals was held for so many years.

In 1995, Mike was part of a small group chosen to create a national training series for all YMCA swim coaches. He helped write the curriculum and manuals for the Principles of YMCA Competitive Swimming and Diving Course, the YMCA Swim Coaches Course and the YMCA Advanced Swim Coaches Course. He then helped update the Principles course in 2004 and 2012. Mike has taught hundreds of YMCA coaches across the country, sharing the fundamentals of leadership and youth development through YMCA Swimming.

Locally, Mike volunteers with Southwest Ohio high school swimming and the local summer league. The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati recognized Mike's commitment and contributions by naming the pool at Powel Crosley the "Leonard Family Aquatic Center" in 2005. In 2012, Mike and his late father funded the rebuilding of the 50 meter outdoor pool at PCY and in 2014, he contributed a bubble to the facility in order to make it a year-round feature of the YMCA.

Mike is a proud husband to his wife, Susie, father to daughters Katie and Meghan and grandfather to 10 month-old Hailey. He is also blessed to be a stepfather to Gary, Rob and Erin and a step-grandfather to Josie, Jessica, Evie and one more on the way.