

## 2014 Central Zone Diversity Select Camp

BY Angela Monty

The Zone Select Diversity Camp was an idea that was dreamed up and inaugurated by the Central Zone. We are the first Zone to host the third camp; 2010 was in Indianapolis, 2012 was in Oklahoma City and we held the 2014 Camp in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin. The three things that were different about this camp versus the National Diversity Select Camp was 1. It was to be held by the Zone in the Zone. 2. Each LSC would be responsible to choose the athlete and adult standards for attendance with very basic guidelines set by the goals and intent of the camp and 3. It was a camp that included an adult component to help enable the athletes to take what they learned and did at the camp back to the LSC. The purpose was to instill a vision of success and inspire athletes from under-represented populations to become leaders in the sport of swimming. Goals of this camp were to empower athletes from under represented populations and their coaches to:

- Demonstrate the viability of inclusiveness in swimming within their local LSC
- Achieve performance excellence at every level of the sport
- Expound the benefits and value of participating in the sport of swimming
- Be positive leaders and role models that others from socioeconomic backgrounds can emulate
- To connect, network and promote the virtues of the sport of swimming through a comprehensive strategy involving the athletes, coaches and LSC Diversity Chairs in their own local LSC's and throughout the Central Zone.

Typical participants from each LSC include two athletes between the ages of 13- 16 at the time of the camp (9-10th grades), one coaches, and one diversity and inclusion chair.

Athletes must have qualified in at least one individual event in their local LSC championship meet in either SCY or LC seasons. In the event that there are no qualifying swimmers, the LSC can elect to send two athletes of its choice. Each LSC will select the two athletes they wish to represent that LSC per their own application process. The LSC will then select one coach from a diverse cultural group or a coach of a diverse cultural team based on their own LSC evaluation.

Each LSC will fund two athletes, a coach and their Diversity Chair to the camp. Funding will need to include their transportation to and from the camp, and an additional fee that will cover rooming, all meal costs per person, and local event ground transportation including transportation from airport to the hotel and return transportation to the Airport. The three day camp program was to include a combination of pool training, motivational and educational sessions, networking and strategic planning sessions for members of each LSC, and team building activities.

The camp staff included a head coach selected through a national search by USA Swimming, two assistant coaches, a national athlete along with the camp oversight committee. As well as speakers Richard Butler is the Inclusion Manager for United States Rowing Association who brings a background of leadership with a cross functional and diverse background that includes business, wellness and leadership development and Miriam Lynch is The Potomac Valley Diversity Chair and also is on the USA Swimming Diversity board. She has been involved in many diversity efforts in her LSC as well as across the country. She is a motivational and enthusiastic speaker.

The first camp in Indianapolis spent a lot of time in lectures and goal planning sessions for the athletes to take back to their respective LSC's. The camp in Oklahoma spent more hands on time getting involved in the community by hosting a group swimming lesson, this camp's specific goal was to empower the athletes and adult participants to be advocates and leaders of USA Swimming for their LSC and their teams. We worked to make this camp an inspiring and memorable experience. Most participants had never traveled to Wisconsin before.

The 2014 camp included 30 athletes and 20 adult representatives from eight LSC's in the Central Zone; Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Lake Erie, Michigan, Minnesota, Oklahoma and Wisconsin. The diversity spectrum included race, color, religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, age, and socioeconomic status.

USA Swimming staffed three coaches. Two were from the Washington DC Area: Miriam Lynch and Rahim Booth and Chadli Fernandez was from Miami, FL. Professional Athlete Representative was Sabir Muhammad. Other Presenters included Richard Butler from USA Rowing, Pam Lowenthal Central Zone Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator and Manny Banks from USA Swimming. Camp Management included Jess Schaetz FCY, Brett Wilson BAC, Kevin Milak PX3 and Angela Monty FCY.

Camp was scheduled to start in Pleasant Prairie on Thursday, June 5th at noon for all staff participants. We were able to coordinate the pickup of two of the staff participants to bring them with us from the Milwaukee Airport. Pat Lewno, treasurer of Wisconsin Swimming, met us at the hotel for registration and check in of participants. The rest of the staff did not make it for the first evening of activities. One had a flight rerouted the other was just scheduled to come in late.

We rented 4 vans to transport athletes and adults from hotel to pool. This worked well. Illinois had also rented a van and we utilized their van for transportation as well. Our hotel was about a 10 minute commute to the pool. Once we were at the pool we stayed the

majority of the day. Based on feedback given from past camps we had published the agenda prior to attendance and we had 2 presenters that backed out due to last minute family emergencies.

Based on feedback from the prior camps there was a request to have the agenda turned out in advance of participation. This was sent out, edited and resent a number of times before the start of the camp. A copy of the itinerary is also attached to this email. As we found with so many people backing out, staff not making it to the camp by scheduled times and not knowing the schedule of the featured athlete we used the schedule as a general basis for meals and practice times and changed the entire format for the rest of the camp based on speakers. We had padded in some time for transportation in the itinerary and this was not necessary because we ran a minimum of 30 minutes ahead the entire camp. Following check in the Athletes had their first workout in SCY and the Adults went to a Richard Butler presentation at the Rec Plex. We had dinner at the Rec Plex and continued to do many bonding activities and lectures until 8:45 PM.

The next morning we started the athletes with breakfast, another workout and the adults went into more lectures. We had a grill out, some beach play time. After lunch we brought both that adult and athlete groups together to do breakouts by LSC for a camp feedback and goal planning session. We asked them for three things liked about the camp, three things to work on and some things they can do in their LSC to start educating others about diversity and inclusion and other leadership ideas that they would like to take back to their LSC's. This went very well. Highlights from polling were Food, roommate assignments to meet new people, venue, activities, and new experiences. Points to work on- hotel, advertising the camp in each LSC and they gave us great ideas on things to include in future camp packets as information for participants- ie a packing list, etc.

The Wisconsin Athletes and adult representative were:

Milia Bissen BAC, Gabriella Gnewuch BAC, Issac Jiardini SSTY, Cora Mack BAC, Gabby Mulally FCY, Kelly Rodriguez BAC and Cristina Mullally USA Official from FCY. They would like to set up a booth at the Spring 2015 12 & Under State Meet to promote Team Wisconsin participation at the Central Zone Multicultural meet in Brownsburg, IN in June of 2015. Many expressed interest in applying to the National Diversity Select Camp in Colorado Springs and most would like to participate in hosting a clinic with many of the details yet to be determined.

Following the breakout session the athletes participated in another workout- 1 hour LCM 1 hour Open Water with the adults observing. This was a very new experience for most because they had never swam in open water before (two athletes returned to the Open Water Championships the following week). We ate dinner at the Rec Plex. During dinner we hosted a question answer session with the two senior athletes from Wisconsin Swimming who have had different paths in diversity and inclusion and leadership. Emma Blackdeer from DFAC talked about her experience at the 2012 Central Zones Diversity Select Camp inspiring her to apply for the National Camp. She was selected and attended in 2013. Alexia Monty spoke about participating in 2013 USAS and becoming an official athlete representative for Wisconsin Swimming. Both girls also talked about their swimming accomplishments (championship level meets attained), their goals including collegiate swimming and their experience at the first Central Zones Multicultural Meet in IL. After this presentation Sabir Muhammad finished the evening by sharing his story. The third day we started the same way with breakfast, early workout and some lectures from Manny Banks USA Swimming, Pam Lowenthal and Richard Butler. After lunch the athletes went on a scavenger hunt put together by the senior athletes. The adults did an interactive activity with Richard Butler to highlight the difference in cultures that we are subjected to. Following this we had one more pool workout, loaded up the vans and headed to Six Flags Great America for 4 hours. This was an awesome experience for everyone. Standing in line most had time to network, bond and connect. The athletes and adults thanked us for the experience. One accomplished athlete even said, "This is the best experience I have ever had swimming. I will definitely be at the Multicultural Meet in 2015 so I can see all of my friends." The camp staff knew that we had made an impact because electronic devices were only brought out to take pictures to document the experience otherwise most stayed in pockets. We created a few hashtags, opened a facebook page and an instagram account just tied to this camp so the participants can stay in contact.

While at this camp- I shared a hashtag that my team uses often #swamily. The athletes and LSC Reps arrived as just that and they left a swamily.

We would like to have this camp run in conjunction with the trials because they will be in the Central Zone in 2016 and Wisconsin has been approached by USA Swimming about placing another bid for potentially 2018.

## **Diversity Coordinator's Reports**

**October 15, 2012**

The Central Zone was pleased to have two bids this year for both the 2013 Central Zone Diversity Meet and the 2014 Central Zone Diversity Camp. STAR of Minnesota submitted a bid for both the 2013 CZ

Diversity Meet and the 2014 CZ Diversity Camp. Patriot Aquatic Club in Lincolnshire, Illinois submitted a bid for the 2013 CZ Diversity Meet, and YMCA of Fox Cities in Wisconsin submitted a bid for the 2014 CZ Diversity Camp. The bid was awarded to Patriot Aquatic Club of Illinois for the Central Zone Diversity

Meet on June 8-9, 2013 hosted at Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois , and the 2014 Central Zone Diversity Camp was awarded to YMCA of the Fox Cities to host at the RecPlex in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin.

In speaking with all the CZ Diversity bidders it has been noted that a more defined outline for the CZ Diversity Meet bid should be worked on for the next selection process. I will begin this immediately to allow for bids at the USAS 2013 Convention. The Central Zone will continue to award bids 2 years out to help facilitate planning and participation from all LSCs.

The Central Zone Diversity Meet will be a competitive event in an LC venue with LSC sponsored teams. While this will be the premier for this event in the Central Zone we are working to get information out to all LSCs so they may start their team selection process. On the Saturday evening of the meet the host club will sponsor an athlete meal to give the athletes time to unwind from the day's competition and get to know each other, as we believe the bonds forged in this type of environment can last a lifetime.

There will also be guest speakers during the meal to tell their stories and experiences. After the meal there will be a hosted Coaches Social.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pam Lowenthal  
Central Zone Diversity Coordinator