

Dear Donnie,

In honor of you and Ronnie's birthday I wanted to write you both letters. This year will be my third year on the team and I couldn't be happier with decision to stick with year round swimming and the team.

When I joined Orinda Aquatics I was a very shy and timid eighth grader who was convinced that I would just try out for a week or two and then return to my summer team in the spring where I was super comfortable. I have never been more glad that I was wrong. The team has helped me grow in so many ways including my character and swimming. In addition to helping me grow it has been one of the most challenging things I have ever done. I am constantly being told to choose one thing or another such as practice or a party, babysitting job, school events, etc. I have yet to regret choosing swim over these other options. In a way these choices have helped me discover who my true friends are and what I want to do with my life. I wasn't planning on drinking or doing drugs in high school or the future but what truly moved me to deciding that I would never drink or do drugs is the articles that you guys give us. All of the meetings that you and the other coaches give inspire me to always try my best and to continue trying to do the right thing. Upon joining the team I knew what the definition of "Character First" meant but I did not truly understand it. As I am sure I do not fully understand it yet and maybe I never will but what I know now is how I base my life. I am constantly thinking in the back of my head, "Is this Character First?" or "Would Ronnie and Donnie be proud of me right now?". Lastly I would like to thank you for creating the one place that I feel like I truly truly belong in and where I feel accepted for who I am and for letting me go to Clovis even though I could not swim.

Sincerely,

Simone Ostler

P.s Thank you for the breakfast burrito! :)