

SUMMER 2015

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SWIMSWAMI

RACE SWAMI'S COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



SWAMI GOES TO CEDAR!

Thanks to a grant from the **George S. and Dolores Doré Eccles Foundation**, Race Swami was able to attend the SUSA Memorial Day Weekend Meet on May 22 and 23, 2015. The meet was held at the J.L. Sorenson Physical Education Building, which is located on the campus of Southern Utah University in Cedar City. This was the second consecutive year Race Swami, an outreach USA Swimming program serving low-income families in Salt Lake City's west side communities, attended the long course meet which includes teams from northern and southern Utah.

Last year, 18 SWAMIs made the trip south for what was then the team's inaugural team travel meet. However, with more funds available this year for the swimmers, Race Swami sent a whopping 33 swimmers to the meet. The team trip included a Friday evening pizza party as well as a complimentary team breakfast preceding Saturday's morning session at the pool.

But the highlight of the two-day meet had to be the Swamis' performances in the pool. As a team, the Swamis registered a better-than-95% record for turning in personal best times, quite a feat when considering each Swami swam at least five races—and many turned in as many as 8 races at the meet.

Along with Head Coach Matt Finnigan and assistant coach Marcela Vasquez, many parents accompanied the SWAMIs to Cedar City and displayed their legendary team spirit by adorning themselves in colorful Swami Gear and cheering loudly whenever a SWAMI was racing.

"It kind of felt like home pool advantage," claimed 12 & Under swimmer Jesus Corona, who turned in huge swims in the 200-meter freestyle, 400-meter freestyle and 800-meter freestyle. "I love this pool; it feels fast. And the meet is so fun."

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SWAMI EDUCATIONAL DAY AT THE U

More than 40 SWAMI swimmers and parents attended a one day workshop directed by Ed Muñoz and his Ethnic Studies class at the University of Utah. The educational day covered gender and ethnic-related topics, as well as college prep information.

On Saturday, April 11th, Race Swami was treated to a College Skills and Personal Development Day headed by Swami Board member and University of Utah Director of Ethnic Studies, Dr. Ed Muñoz and his U of U Introduction to Ethnic Studies class.

More than 40 SWAMI swimmers and parents attended the educational workshop held at the Spencer Fox Eccles Business Building on the UofU campus. The day covered topics including Multicultural Jeopardy, Healthy Peer Relationships, and Continuing Education and College Prep (given in both English and Spanish). Though Dr. Muñoz composed much of

the structure of what topics would be covered on the day, it was his students who designed and implemented the plan for the SWAMIs.

As it turned out, the SWAMI community enjoyed their day on campus. "I hope we do more things like this as a community," said one parent. "I love when we do stuff away from the pool," said 10-year old Junior Swami Lorena Thompson. "We just seem to grow as a team."

Towards the end of the workshop, the SWAMIs were given a guided tour of the campus by Ed's students,

who took the kids to the Student Union Center, and showed them some of the new buildings going up around campus. The highlight was the new campus George S. Eccles Student Life Center that includes a sparkling 50-meter pool. “We need one of those!” exclaimed 15-year old Maria Fregoso. “Look at all that lane space!”

The SWAMI swimmers and parents were also treated to a tasty lunch donated by fellow Swami board member, Jorge Fierro, owner of Rico’s Market and Frida Bistro.



Top photo: Parents and swimmers from Race Swami play a game of “Multicultural Jeopardy” during their one-day personal development workshop at the University of Utah under the guidance of Dr. Ed Muñoz and his Intro to Ethnic Studies class. **Above:** Oscar Romero Scholarship honoree, Marcela Vasquez, pictured with Swami head coach Matt Finnigan at her graduation party at Frida Bistro. According to Matt, Marcela has served an integral role with the team as an inspirational leader.

SWAMI’S MARCELA VASQUEZ AWARDED OSCAR ROMERO SCHOLARSHIP

On May 28, 2015, Race Swami’s **Marcela Vasquez** graduated from Judge Memorial Catholic High School in Salt Lake City. Marcela was one of 160 graduates from the Class of 2015 from the school.

At the Baccalaureate Mass held at the Cathedral of the Madeleine in downtown Salt Lake City—not far from the west side communities Race Swami serves—Marcela was honored with the prestigious Archbishop Oscar Romero Scholarship, an award given to worthy students of ethnic diversity who are in need of scholarship assistance to help cover the college tuition fees.

“I feel honored,” Marcela said afterwards. “The award is given to people for whom they believe are social justice advocates and will make an impact in the world. That being my ultimate goal, it’s good to know I’m heading down the right path.”

Though Marcela certainly left a huge impression during her time at Judge Memorial, her presence at Race Swami was likely even more evident. In being the eldest member of a very young, up-and-coming swim program, it gave Marcela the opportunity to grow as a leader for the team’s younger teammates. According to her coach, Matt Finnigan, Marcela served an integral role as the organization’s mentor and role model for so many impressionable SWAMIs—ranging in ages as young as 6 and as old as 15.

“They definitely have looked up to her, seeing how successful she’s been,” Matt said. “In the classroom, in the pool, in how she carries herself. Marcela has been the epitome of a team leader. She may be leaving us next fall, but her legacy here will certainly live on.”

Marcela will be attending the University of New Mexico next fall and plans to focus her studies on Mechanical Engineering.

Obviously, the program has meant much to her since she joined the team back in 2011.

“Swami has meant so much to me over the years,” she says. “It has opened my mind, body, and soul to great opportunities. I’ve not only met my second family but bonded with them. They have watched me develop into the person I am today, and encouraged me to be the person I want to be. I wouldn’t have gotten to this point without my mom, nor Race Swami.”

RACE SWAMI UNVEILS GOLD SWIM CAPS FOR BIG MEETS

In February 2015, while attending the Senior State Championship Meet in St. George, Race Swami unveiled a broad new tradition by debuting a gold swim cap that would be used for the relays and finals at the meet. The traditional green caps were worn during preliminary races at the Senior meet, but then the gold caps were unleashed for all the evening races throughout the 3-day affair. The sparkling new metallic gold caps came as a complete surprise to the SWAMIs, who breezed through team-record setting relays on their way to a Top 20 finish overall.

The gold caps made additional appearances in March 2015, first at the Beehive Finale meet in Provo, then a week later at the Utah Age Group State Championship. At the later meet, the caps were worn for the evening races only, just like at the Senior State Meet a month prior. Perhaps the most significant race came when the 11-12 Girls 200 Medley Relay raced to a compelling 1st place finish from Lane 9 in the first of two heats. The team of **Natasha Franco**, **Angie Fregoso**, **Arianna Holsten**, and **Daniela Thompson** finished 8th place overall in a field of 22 (Race Swami was seeded 20th going into the race). Thus, a new tradition was born! A legendary story was made!



SWAMI Senior relay unveil the new gold swim caps at the Senior State Meet in St. George. Pictured from left to right; Marcela Vasquez, Emily Dixon, Peyton Ledbetter and Sarah Andersen.

The gold caps were meant to evoke hair raising emotion for the Swami Community—swimmers, coaches, parents, and fans alike. Given the results from the last three championship meets, they have done just that! Race Swami has always been intrigued by symbolic gestures that pay ode to inspiring stories from the past—from the Fleur-di-Lis logo, to the whimsical Mexican-inspired team shirts, to the end-of-season Team Fiesta. This new tradition will only fuel that line by giving SWAMIs an extra incentive to conjure up their very best, knowing that the gold caps symbolize the celebration of a hard-fought season full of adversity, team-bonding, community-building, and personal growth.

Unlike the traditional green SWAMI caps, which can proclaim an array of messages including, "Sí Se Puede," "Make a Difference," or a personal name (first name, last name, or nickname), the gold caps bode just the team's unofficial mantra, "Sí Se Puede!" or "yes we can!"

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If there was ever a time to dare, to make a difference, to embark on something worth doing, **IT IS NOW.** Unknown



At top, SWAMIs chillin' at the Team Breakfast at the Best Western Conference Room in Cedar City, where the team stayed. Above, Natasha, Lorena and Daniela pose between races at the SUSA Memorial Day Weekend meet held at SUU's Aquatic Center.

CEDAR TEAM TRIP

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Added 11 year old Madelane Balbuena: "I like the team trip because we all get to go to a far away place and stay overnight in a hotel with our teammates. I feel like I get to know my friends even better. We support each other and we swim fast for each other."

Team parent and Swami co-founder Mary Chris Finnigan expressed appreciation for the Eccles Foundation, as the donation went a long way in allowing the team to attend the meet. "Team trips can be very important character builders for kids, in general. And for our kids it's an even bigger deal since many of them have never experienced anything like this. So, without the generous support from these outside sources, this wouldn't have been possible. We thank the Eccles Foundation for making it possible!"