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Spotlight on Coach Chris Karelus – Fanwood Scotch Plains YMCA 2016 Long Course YMCA Nationals Coach of the Meet

Chris Karelus began swimming with the Fanwood Scotch Plains YMCA in New Jersey in 1993 as a 13 year-old only who had just moved from Poland for his father's job. He spoke little English but swimming was a universal language for him. The YMCA was the closest swimming opportunity to his family's new home and his parents believed it would help him get settled more quickly. While Chris hated to leave his friends behind in Poland, the Y became a second home and a "safety net" to him. It was welcoming and had a true "team" concept that he works to maintain in the FSPY program today.

In essence, Chris has never left the Fanwood Scotch Plains YMCA. During breaks from college at the University of Delaware, he worked at the Y as a part time coach. He became the head coach of FSPY in 2010 and has consistently promoted a sense of family and teamwork. As he has grown the team – currently 225 swimmers and 14 part time coaches working out of the YMCA's 6-lane pool – he has maintained a "Team First" mantra. When he won this year's *Coach of the Meet Award* at Long Course YMCA Nationals, he was quick to share the recognition with his swimmers and fellow coaches. "It is not an individual award," reflected Chris. To him, it recognized the collective effort and spirit of the entire Y community.

Chris also appreciates the support that the entire YMCA community provides to him and the swim team program. From the CEO to fellow members, the team concept extends beyond the pool at FSPY. Chris has helped with a mental health pilot program that the Y sponsored and the FSPY team holds a "Swim for Food" drive benefiting the local food bank.

Congratulations to Chris on the *Coach of the Meet Award* and on promoting a strong community of support and achievement!

