



2022 YMCA Swimming Coaches of the Year

Each year the YMCA recognizes a coach who has positively impacted the lives of swimmers, families and the community through their leadership and embodiment of the YMCA's core values. The Coach of the Year is also generously awarded with a gift certificate from SwimOutlet.

This year, two passionate and tenured coaches have been selected to receive the award and gift from SwimOutlet.

Keira Cruz, Lakeland Hills YMCA (NJ)

Keira has made a lifelong commitment to the Lakeland Hills YMCA, where she swam as a youth and spent the last 30 years coaching. She is recognized as an inspirational and transformational leader to thousands of swimmers, parents and coaches during her tenure. As one swimmer says, "We follow the saying NO EXCUSES" every time we go to practice. Keira's inspirational actions inspire us to reach for the stars and push that much harder each day".

She challenges each individual to be their best and to give their best to others.

"We as swimmers have been shown through example to treat each member of the Y the same...whether they are 7 years old or an 18 yr old senior preparing to swim at the collegiate level", shares a current team member.

"Kiera is not just teaching us to swim but using her position to create positive impacts on the community around us".

"Each LHY swimmers past and present has a story involving Coach Kiera that describes just how much she has meant to them. She is a perfect example of what a coach should be".

Bill Whatley, Blue Ash YMCA (OH)

For 33 years, Bill has positively impacted swimmers, families and the entire Blue Ash community. He teaches his swimmers to give back and each year organizes community events to help Y members. During COVID, Bill helped the Y provide childcare for health care workers in addition to sustaining the swim team program.

Blue Ash parents express appreciation for a team environment that includes every level of swimmer and cite Bill's internship program in which senior level swimmers assist age group coaches in mentoring young swimmers. As one parent shares, "His impact is very strong and his legacy is felt by all swimmers and families he has touched. Bill is a lifelong coach to his swimmers...he truly cares for his swimmers during their time at Blue Ash into their collegiate years are beyond." Bill is also a leader among his coaching and YMCA peers and has served as a regional representative for YMCA swimming in Ohio, West Virginia, Indiana and Kentucky.