



SPMS VOLUNTEERS RECOGNIZED BY USMS

Submitted by Becky Cleavenger | MemberAtLarge@SPMasterSwim.org

The United States Masters Swimming (USMS) annual meeting concluded recently. Virtual meetings of committees, zones, the board of directors, and forums were spread throughout the months of August and September, culminating with the House of Delegates meetings September 24, 25, and 26. If you are interested, you can find all the information including meeting minutes, election results, award recipients, and an emotional in memoriam video at www.usms.org/volunteer-central/annual-meeting/2021-annual-meeting.

This article focuses on the SPMS members who were recognized with national awards. Congratulations to all who were nominated and who were selected.



Dorothy Donnelley Service Award: **Adam Larson, West Hollywood Aquatics**

The Dorothy Donnelley Service Award recognizes USMS members whose volunteer service has contributed to the growth, improvement, or success of U.S. Masters Swimming locally, regionally,

and/or nationally. Dot Donnelly was a member of USMS at its inception and served tirelessly as a coach, meet director, and ambassador for our organization. She served on the USMS Executive Committee as its elected Secretary for four years. In addition, Dot maintained the USMS National Office from her home for many years. Individuals are selected for the Dorothy Donnelly Service Award based on their contributions that align with the USMS goals and objectives.

Adam Larson overhauled the West Hollywood Aquatics website and newsletter at a time when the team was left without the home pool they were accustomed to and seeking a new pool to call home during the pandemic. Through his efforts, the team is better connected now than ever. Through this volunteer work, Adam has become the heart and soul of his team.



USMS
AWARDS



Kerry O'Brien Coaches Award

Kiley Ames, West Hollywood Aquatics

This award recognizes USMS coaches who are building membership in communities throughout the country. Originally named the Grassroots Coaching Award, it has been renamed to honor Coach Kerry O'Brien of Walnut Creek Masters, who embodies the passion, dedication, and heart that these coaches bring to the pool deck. It is with the efforts of individuals like these that U.S. Masters Swimming will most certainly move to a greater level.

Few have experienced rebuilding a team from the ground up, creating an environment that quenches their athletes' quest for knowledge, engagement, and personal challenge. Migrating a group of nomad swimmers hungry for the environment they were accustomed to 10 miles away to an available pool and yard by yard, workout by workout, Kiley reinstated a semblance of normalcy. Creativity and levity were tools she called upon to infuse fun back into the training environment. Kiley makes clear that the person is what matters, not the speed they possess in the water.



Fitness Award

Christie Ciraulo, UCLA Masters

This award honors USMS members who demonstrate outstanding contribution to fitness activities within USMS. Christie has been involved in USMS since 1995 and, when pools shut down at the beginning of the pandemic and with teammates and other area swimmers looking for a way to continue their passion, Christie educated them on the benefits and joys of open water swimming and encouraged them to give it a try. Thus the "Pod" was born. The Pod consists of dedicated and consistent swimmers of all skill levels - the only requirement is willingness to brave the cold water, high waves, and wind chop of the Pacific throughout the year. One of her greatest strengths is her ability to bring together a diverse group of people who have a desire to swim and stay fit in common.



Open Water Service Award:

Robin Smith

The Open Water Service Award honors an individual who has made significant service contributions to promoting and building excellence in USMS open water swimming in the following ways: embodying the USMS mission, vision, goals, and objectives through open water swimming service; contributing to open water notably in several roles (i.e., USMS Open Water/Long Distance national committees, LMSC open water/long distance chair, event and/or safety director, official, coach, clinician, and/or volunteer); contributing to open water notably at different levels of USMS (i.e. national, zone, LMSC, and/or local); and contributing extraordinary measurable service achievement and impact.

Robin is a member of the USMS Long Distance Committee and is the current SPMS Open Water Chair. Robin is a leader focused on increasing the number of open water events and ensuring they are conducted safely. She has shown incredible hustle in reaching out to open water event hosts and promoting the benefits of sanctioning, resulting in an increased number of USMS sanctioned open water events.

Robin attends each sanctioned open water event in person, helping hosts with on-site registration and safe execution, and helps to market the benefits of SPMS membership. She works seamlessly with event hosts as well as facility staff, lifeguards, and event staff to ensure events go smoothly and participants have a good experience.



There were 130 participants entries including 50 USMS Participants (18&O) and 80 USA Swimming athletes (10&U through 15&O). For some of the participants, this was their very first open water race experience. Everyone had lots of fun and there were lots of smiles and ribbons all around.

We would like to thank the host Mission Viejo Nadadores Masters, the Lake Mission Viejo HOA, the lifeguards, and our officials for providing a safe and fair race course for all.

The 2021 SPMS Open Water Season is now concluded. We look forward to 2022 and are hopeful that our annual events and ocean swims will return to the calendar.



FUN IN THE SUN AT THE ANNUAL MISSION MILE OPEN WATER SWIM!

Submitted by Robin Smith | Open Water Chair and member of the USMS Long Distance Committee | OpenWater@SPMasterSwim.org

The Mission Viejo Nadadores Masters hosted the Annual Mission Mile Open Water Event at Lake Mission Viejo, CA on Sunday September 12, 2021. It was dual sanctioned with both USMS and USA Swimming. With capacity limits and time constraints in place, the schedule of events was a little different than in previous years. In addition to the one mile swim, the host included 800m and 400m distances instead of the usual two-mile swim. And a new out-and-back race course was unveiled.



Mel had trained hard both by land and by sea, to be ready to hammer the most famous footrace in the world. Running in the only open marathon in 2020 in LA, she missed the Boston cutoff by four minutes with a 4:00.56. Still, the McCourt Foundation had reached out to her via email and invited her to join their team. As a McCourt member, she was running to raise money for neurological research for ALS, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, and MS.

Checking our phones before getting in the water, we can see her first six miles of splits seem slow. We think – yea, but with a crowd of runners at the start, 10-minute miles is to be expected. Now, post pod swim, her mile splits are up to 12 and 13 minutes. Instead of a hoped-for sub four-hour finish, it appears as if there wouldn't be a finish at all.

“I've always been a runner, but when my brother died,” Mel explains, “I started open water swimming. It is so important for me to take on challenges and face my fears. His life was cut short. I was going to live mine to the fullest – for him and for me.

“I walked away from my first open water race without getting in. I was looking at the big surf and thought – this is terrifying, I'm not going to do this. I had tried to train without a swim group, but the entire concept of open water and surf scared me.”

Then Covid-19 hit and the pools all shut down. Swimmers started venturing to the ocean. Many had not previously considered open water swimming. Santa Monica beaches beckoned to novices and veterans alike, becoming an unofficial meeting spot. Mel saw the posts about UCLA Masters group swims and thought it would be great cross-training with her running.

“If I think back to how I reboot in the open water,” Mel explains “I realize it was through knowledge, understanding and support. I stood in the beach parking lot and I could see the experienced ones looking at the ocean and reading its mood. The surfers and swimmers put their heads together speaking their own language. Tides. Currents. Swell intervals. Height. Water temp. Air temp. Weather wonks, for sure. It was overwhelming.

“And inclusivity. I was hanging around and they all looked over and said, ‘C'mon girl, don't just stand there!’ There is nothing more incredible than when your pod mates help you get past the breaking surf and throw you a high five. You get under those waves and out into the beauty of the water and the confidence just flows.”

#bestpodever has a right to be concerned watching Mel's splits slowly crank by on the Boston Marathon app. Congregating in the parking lot (affectionally called “the locker room”), the texts and encouragements start flying across the country.

ONE IF BY LAND, TWO IF BY SEA A POD MATE RUNS THE BOSTON MARATHONS

Submitted by Christie Ciraulo

Ten of us are in the beach parking lot getting geared up for a 4,000-meter open water workout, looking at our phones. The #bestpodever is tracking open water pod mate, Mel Latt, long time SPMA and USMS member, and experienced marathoner. She is in the middle of running the 2021 Boston Marathon and her splits are way slower than anticipated. Now, 90 minutes later, post swim and back on our phones, the splits have turned night-mare-ish.

According to Mel, all that open water training came into play during a very difficult and injury-plagued race.

“There was so much I took from ocean swimming to use for running,” Mel said. “After the first three miles, it got ugly. I had done two races leading up to Boston, and I think it was a mistake. The pain started at mile five and it was bad. I kept theoretically thinking, ‘if I can just get under that next ocean wave, it will be clear sailing to the finish.’ I feel like the process of going out through the surf and swimming in the ocean allows you to find this place where you can dig deeper than you ever imagined.

“I knew everyone in the parking lot was watching the app. I knew they were there. I COULD FEEL IT. My pod was behind me. When I finally had to slow down to a fast walk, I looked at my phone and it was flooded with cheers, photos and well wishes. It was mind-blowing. I know I am swimming with amazing people.

“I finished. I went the distance. It was a difficult 5:15.00 drama, but I finished.”

Mel’s goal is to recover from a torn left quadricep and try to run next year’s L.A. Marathon, with the goal of heading back to Boston in April 2023.

“The atmosphere there is electrifying,” Mel reminisces. “The entire town is behind their Marathon. When you run down Charles Street and turn onto Boylston the feeling is incomparable! But first, the ocean. The ocean is my healing place. Not just the swimming part, either. It’s being there with my pod.”



Mel running



#bestpodever the photo we sent to Mel

Tim Burke, Kim Meyer, Fay Kessouri, Christie Ciraulo, Bobby Benfield, Mary Jurey and Hannah Levien, UCLA Bruin Masters



Mel's bruise



Tracking Mel on the Boston Marathon course



It is important to be aware of what triggers the AFib. It can be many different things, including supplements, atrial ectopy (a miss signaling of the heart physiology), inflammation, heart adaptation to high strain, fibrosis and more. It is important to know YOUR trigger and have your cardiologist guide the treatment right for YOU.

There have been many studies to seek answers as to the why's and the best treatments. There is no clear solution. The key lies in identifying a change and seeking help. The common signs of AFib are: shortness of breath that comes and goes day to day or randomly during practice, exhaustion beyond what would be considered normal, a continually elevated or irregular heart rate, poor sleep, inability to recover, and in extreme cases tunnel vision with strain or even passing out (syncope).

The treatment can be as simple as changing your energy drink, caffeine/alcohol habits, assessing medications or, in some cases ablation.

Take away for today: even as a healthy and in shape athlete you are at risk for AFib, especially if you have more than 50 birthdays. Be aware, be wise and listen to your body. Being aware how our heart works for us while exercising will give us the ability to stay in the water and swim in a sustainable and safe way.

SKIPPING A BEAT?

Submitted by Arlette Godges | Sports Medicine | SportsMedicine@SPMasterSwim.org

My trigger for writing an article for this newsletter is always a conversation with a fellow USMS swimmer. In this case, it's been many over the years. I have stayed away from the topic as it is a broad and comprehensive. I have decided to tackle it in a newsletter format as an informational piece with the emphasis on awareness and education. Full disclosure, if you feel ANY of these symptoms, please go see a cardiologist and get a full work up. The following information is to increase the AWARENESS of atrial fibrillation: AFib, the most common arrhythmia. I am not diagnosing or suggesting specific treatments.

AFib is the most common cardiac arrhythmia in athletes, especially in middle aged to older endurance athletes. Swimmers are endurance athletes and we see many swimmers struggling with AFib. The important fact is that you recognize the signs and seek professional guidance on how YOU should approach YOUR AFib.

WE WANT TO HELP COACHES & CLUBS

Submitted by Anita Cole | Marketing@SPMasterSwim.org

The SPMS Marketing and Club Development Committee is composed of Anita Cole, Kris McPeak, Megan Johnston, and Karin Perissinotto. We are available to help coaches. We want to help clubs grow their membership.

Please reach out to us if your Masters Club needs assistance in setting up club social media platforms or if your club could use free marketing materials. We have free brochures, stickers, decals, caps, and luggage tags. These items make excellent goodie bag stuffers for new members. Brochures should be left at the pool offices to promote Masters Swimming.

Email us at Marketing@SPMasterSwim.org if you just want to share ideas during this stressful time of COVID-19 or if we can help you in any way. Don't forget about the grants that are available!

NOVEMBER 20TH - 21ST, 2021

2021 Ron Johnson Invitational SW Zone SCM Championships

[Click below for the meet pdf](#)

https://www.clubassistant.com/club/meet_information.cfm?c=1044&smid=14147&fbclid=IwAR0irzn4TBOEm7NcPh-3g3wspffBg_uml5clrYSHsxd6guBoomVFLH7IBuw3g3wspffBg_uml5clrYSHsxd6guBoomVFLH7IBuw

As we head into 2022, meets are coming back to their regular schedule.

We have been receiving requests to save the dates so if you are interested in hosting a meet, please email

ViceChair@SPMasterSwim.org as soon as possible.

VOLUNTEER AND COACH EDUCATIONAL WEBINARS

PRESENTED BY THE LMSC DEVELOPMENT AND COACHES COMMITTEES

Submitted by Coach Education / Diversity Webinars Banner

The goal of these calls is to provide an opportunity for volunteers and coaches to pose questions, get answers, discuss challenges, and share successes as you fulfill your roles. In turn, the LMSC Development Committee and/or the Coaches Committee can use the information shared to help build a repository of best practices for each of our coaches and volunteer positions.

Mark your calendars for the next educational webinar(s)

Calls are scheduled at 8:00 PM Eastern for one hour and are tentatively scheduled on the second Tuesday and/or third Thursday

SPMS MEET UPDATES

Submitted by Ken Brisbin | Vice Chair | ViceChair@SPMasterSwim.org

NOVEMBER 19TH - 21ST, 2021

2021 Gobbler Classic Short Course Yards Swim Meet

[Click below for the meet pdf](#)

https://www.clubassistant.com/c/8B6A80C/file/meets/2021/2021_SLO_Gobbler_Classic_Meet_Sheet.pdf



of each month, with the exception of September and December. Registration links will be provided below for each discussion topic. Contact [volunteer services](#) for more information.

Education

Each session will be hosted by subject-matter experts on a specific topic, schedule and pace driven by current BOD & USMS priorities

November

- **Nov. 9** - Diversity & Inclusion Interactive Breakout Session: Race + National Origin / Culture Diversity | [Register here](#)
- **Nov. 30** - Diversity & Inclusion Interactive Breakout Session: Creating an Inclusive Culture at your LMSC | [Register here](#)

December

- Dec. 14 - LMSC Volunteer Development | [Register here](#)

Community

These sessions are coordinated by relevant national committees, hosted by subject-matter experts, focused toward a specific group of volunteers

October

- Oct. 28 - ALTS: "Creating a Legacy: Turning Graduates into Instructors" | [Register here](#)

November

- Nov. 18 - Coaches: Code of Conduct | [Register here](#)

Peer-to-Peer

Hosted by the LMSC Development and/or relevant national committee for a specific LMSC role focused on establishing and growing mentoring relationships

November

- Nov. 4 - LMSC Secretary Peer-2-Peer | [Register here](#)

December

- Dec. 2 - Event Hosting Peer-2-Peer | [Register here](#)

LMSC Update

Hosted by the LMSC Development Committee to review webinar schedule, how to sign up for a national committee meeting as a guest, and highlight info for LMSC volunteers

November

- Nov. 11 - LMSC Update | [Register here](#)

December

- Dec. 9 - LMSC Update | [Register here](#)

Missed a Topic?

Webinar topics are now more easily accessible in the Meeting Minutes section of usms.org by selecting [Webinar Presentations and Notes](#) or [Webinar Recordings](#). Previous discussions include:

- Coaches: "Differently-Abled Swimmers: Water is the Great Unifier"
- LMSC Grievance Process / National Board of Review
- Diversity & Inclusion Education
- Adult Learn-to-Swim (ALTS) Initiatives
- Open Water Swimming – Tips for Swimmers Before the Plunge

Click below for more information:

<https://www.usms.org/volunteer-central/lmscs/peer-to-peer-calls>

UPCOMING SPMS EVENTS



Nov 4 | Thursday

- LMSC Secretary Peer-2-Peer 5:00PM
- SPMS Annual Meeting 7:00PM



Nov 9 | Tuesday

- Diversity & Inclusion Interactive Breakout Session: Race + National Origin / Culture Diversity 5:00PM



Nov 11 | Thursday

- LMSC Update 5:00PM



Nov 15 | Monday

- SPMS Coach of the Year Nominations Due



Nov 18 | Thursday

- Coaches: Code of Conduct 5:00PM



Nov 19 - 21 | Friday - Sunday

- 2021 Gobbler Classic Short Course Yards Swim Meet



Nov 30 | Tuesday

- Diversity & Inclusion Interactive Breakout Session: Creating an Inclusive Culture at your LMSC 5:00PM



Dec 2 | Thursday

- Event Hosting Peer-2-Peer 5:00PM



Dec 9 - Thursday
 • LMSC Update 5:00P



Dec 14 - Tuesday
 • LMSC Volunteer Development 5:00P

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For archived newsletters, please go
<https://www.spmasterswim.org/newsletter-archives/>