

2007 Pump McLaughlin Memorial Award for Spirit and Enthusiasm

GAIL ERIKSON - Allegheny Valley YMCA

“Crystal Gail” Erickson has been swimming at AVY for the past 8 years, and is a 5-time District and 3-time State qualifier. She also swims for the pool-less Freeport High School, and has represented the Yellow Jackets for the past 3 years at WPIAL’s and the past 2 years at PIAA’s. In the summer months you can find her lifeguarding/teaching lessons/making pizza at the world-renowned Sylvan Park pool, where she has been a super swimmer for the past 12 years (Sharks representin’!). She currently holds the Senior Girls 200 IM and 100 back records at AVY; the 200 IM, 100 back, 200 Medley Relay, 200/400 Free Relay records for Freeport H.S.; and the 13-17 Girls 200 Free Relay record at Sylvan.

Gail is of course a high honor student at Freeport, and is involved in pretty much every activity the area has to offer. She volunteers through the Key Club, is a reader for First United Presbyterian Church, lifeguards and teaches swimming lessons at the Y, and has coordinated two blood drives where she collected over 50 pints of blood.

She aspires to be an elementary school teacher, and would certainly make a great one. It should give her just enough free time to take on a coaching job at AVY!

Crystal Gail is the epitome of what YMCA swimming is all about. She is a coach’s dream, and never utters a negative word about anything or anyone. She’s more concerned with relays than her individuals, and would do absolutely anything to help the team (including the 200 free and IM at pretty much every meet). The only things she has ever complained about are lunges around the pool and not getting to swim as a Novice because she started a year too late. She’s also a frequent winner of “Survivor Thursday”, LOVES leading gumballs during dryland, and has recently mastered the side-of-the-pool flipturn. AVY is beyond lucky to have her, and her teammates and coaches couldn’t be prouder!!

ELLIE HESS - Valley Points Family YMCA

Ellie has shown spirit and enthusiasm not only for YMCA swimming, but also in every day life. She is a leader in many aspects of the YMCA ideals, and represents each: honesty, caring, responsibility, and caring. Ellie has consistently been kind and caring to the younger members of the Y swim team by continually motivating and inspiring them to reach their own goals. As a leader, she holds their hand, gives a hug of encouragement, or offers words of wisdom to all she approaches.

Ellie believes that missing a Nationals cut two years ago by .01 seconds made her work even harder to achieve her Nationals goal. She hopes that working hard for this goal, and others (like WPIALS and summer championships) will inspire the younger girls on the team to work extra for their goals as well.

Ellie is a member of St Margaret Mary’s Church where she presides as a reader for Children’s Liturgy of the Word, and is a member of the youth group. Ellie has received the Burrell Gridiron Scholarship and was nominated for the Judge John J Driscoll Scholar-Athlete Award at Burrell High School.

LAURA MINCEMOYER - Bellefonte YMCA

The Bellefonte Family YMCA Swim Team has proven to be an invaluable growing field for a terrific young woman who truly embodies the attributes of the Pump McLaughlin Memorial Award for Spirit and Enthusiasm. Laura Mincemoyer has a nine-year track record of commitment to YMCA swimming, team-work, encouragement and role-modeling that translates into the spirit of YMCA swimming and a steadfast enthusiasm.

Laura Mincemoyer joined the Bellefonte Family YMCA swimming way-of-life at the age of eight. She became a dedicated swimmer from the outset. When Laura joined the team, it was comprised of only 17 swimmers. It was a team that didn't win a meet in her first two seasons. The team practiced, and still does to this day, in a three lane, 23 ½ yard pool. All meets were, and continue to be, at least 30 miles away. Laura continued to work hard and refine her technique. She received the "Most Improved Swimmer" during her first year, the "Coach's Award" the second, and the coveted Sharon Corman-Settle Award her third year recognizing her for her hard work, dedication and inspiration to other swimmers. At that point, Laura was 12 and was already becoming a leader within the team.

The team and Laura began to realize some successes as the team grew. Laura was seen as a role model by the new swimmers. When Laura entered high school, she joined the high school team but continued to swim YMCA and support the program that spawned her swimming career. Laura's commitment to the sport and the respect of her teammates afforded her the role as high school team captain for the last two years. Like most swimmers, Laura illustrates a strong sense of commitment to the sport and the team.

Laura's enthusiasm for the sport is not only evidenced by her commitment. It is Laura's sense of team that reveals another key value that she maintains. During a meet one will often see Laura wrapped in a towel at the end of a lane cheering her teammates on, no matter what their age. When the coach needed some assistance to have in-water help with the younger age-groups, Laura would often stay after her practice and lend a hand. During the summer, Laura volunteered to help with a stroke clinic to introduce children from the community to the various strokes and provide a taste of competitive swimming. Out of the pool Laura continued to support the team and YMCA swimming through various volunteering activities. She has helped make pies, sold ice cream floats, set-up for meets, tore down after meets, and worked entire weekends at the state championships in those years when she didn't qualify.

The YMCA swim team experience has reinforced, and at times taught Laura key values that have become a permanent part of who Laura Mincemoyer is today. They are values of determination, commitment, enthusiasm, and team and they are evident in and out of the pool. The values have allowed Laura success in, as well as outside of the pool. She is at the top of her class and has been accepted into one of approximately 50 conditional openings in the pharmacy program at the University of Pittsburgh. These values that Laura consistently displays embody the true spirit and mission of YMCA swimming and the YMCA organization.

DYLAN MUDLO - Armstrong County YMCA

On behalf of the Armstrong County YMCA Otter Swim Team, it is my privilege to have the opportunity to nominate Dylan Mudlo for this year's Pump McLaughlin Memorial Award. Through my position at the Armstrong County YMCA, I have had the pleasure of knowing Dylan for the past thirteen years. He has been a member of our swim team since he was five and been a state and district qualifier every year since he was 9 years old. I am struck by Dylan's maturity, integrity, and his ongoing devotion to putting the needs of others before those of his own. He has a unique ability to work with youth and adults, always helping them to achieve more than anyone expected. His advice to the newer members of the team is "Always work hard and never give up on yourself. You can achieve anything if you put your mind to it." He is always an excellent example of our core values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. Dylan has also impressed me with his ability to take on leadership roles with the swim team over the past several years. Many of his peers have developed a great deal of respect for Dylan and quickly follow his lead in team leadership and sportsmanship. The younger swimmers look up to Dylan as a role model, paying heed to his advice. He is definitely a favorite "Team Buddy" and his fellow swimmers love to be around him. Our team is much richer because of Dylan's efforts. I count myself as extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to have Dylan share in my life.

KAITLYN RAMEY - Laurel Highlands Regional Family YMCA

A YMCA swimmer is usually a person who enters the sport at a very young age and makes a lifetime commitment. Though many outsiders don't understand it, there is a bonding between the swimmer and the sport, and a realization that this sport taught them so much throughout the years.

Kaitlyn Ramey is a YMCA swimmer, she is a person who knows YMCA swimming like no other, who is so much a part of the sport she puts her heart and soul into the YMCA philosophy. Kaitlyn has been swimming in the YMCA program for ten years; she has grown into a great team player, a great friend, and a reliable person to all her teammates. Kaitlyn is a YMCA swimmer that will always be beside her team, through all the laughter, all the hard work, all the tears and pain, and all the triumphs and joys. She is a teammate a coach can always turn to, the teammate who will always show up to practice, the teammate who will always be on her feet cheering for everyone on the team, and the teammate who will give encouragement when needed.

Kaitlyn has been a great asset to our program; she has spent many hours volunteering to come early to practice to help teach the little kids when she could have been at home. She has taken time out of her life to go to meets to cheer on her teammates, even when she wasn't swimming. She makes an effort to know everyone on the team, and cheers for everyone that takes their mark. She puts YMCA swimming ahead of all her activities. She helps her coaches with the behind the scenes activities that many know little about. She is always putting a 100% effort into everything she does in YMCA swimming.

Kaitlyn is a YMCA swimmer, a teammate that stands beside you when others come and go. A teammate who always has an encouraging word when others have given up. A teammate that has a laugh that heals your heartaches and the words that always lift your spirits. Kaitlyn is a YMCA swimmer true in heart, a treasure that gives a coach a lifetime of pride.

SHAWN ROBBINS - Hollidaysburg YMCA

The Hollidaysburg Area YMCA coaches are proud to nominate Shawn Robbins for the 2007 Pump McLaughlin Memorial Award for Spirit and Enthusiasm. Shawn is seventeen years old, and is a junior at Hollidaysburg Area High School. He has been swimming since the age of seven, and exemplifies the qualities of spirit and enthusiasm each and every day, both in and out of the pool. Shawn began swimming for Tyrone-Penn State Altoona's team, and moved to the Hollidaysburg YMCA team at the age of ten. For the past seven years, we have had the pleasure to work with Shawn, and see him grow into a fine young man with true character and an unparalleled passion for the sport of swimming. Shawn's motivation and intensity often rub off on our younger swimmers who look to him as a sort of hero. He is very disciplined, as well as self-motivated, often practicing even on days off. He always sets very high goals for himself, and will work until he achieves them. Then, he sets the bar higher. This determination and enthusiasm allowed Shawn to attend YMCA Nationals for the first time last spring in the 100 freestyle and the 50 freestyle. He then attended summer Nationals in the same events.

Shawn holds records for the Hollidaysburg YMCA in the 500, 200, 100, and 50 freestyle events. But, it is not Shawn's ability that sets him apart from the rest. It is truly his character. His enthusiasm does not come out in being a loud, boisterous kind of kid. He is actually very quiet and respectful at all times. Sometimes, you don't even know he's in the water. He listens to what you say, and then just does it, without asking questions. He never complains, talks back, or sits out a set. But, his enthusiasm and spirit for swimming comes out in his actions. He is very dedicated to the sport and to helping the younger swimmers to have the kind of passion that he does for swimming. If he is not swimming, he is behind the blocks, cheering on his teammates and showing his support in a "quiet" way.

We feel that Shawn's character and personality define the kind of spirit that would make Pump McLaughlin proud to have him as a winner of this award.

CARLY SZMYD - Greensburg YMCA

Coach Susie: "We need someone to do the 500 free, 100 fly and the 200 IM? Any takers?"

Carly: "Sure, I'll do it!"

Coach Paul: "I need someone to demonstrate a good fly turn for our cadets over here."

Carly: "Here I come...I'll help."

Coach Sandy: "Our novice boys are behind, we need them to win!"

Carly: "Go little Matt...I love you. You can do it!"

Where there is a need for motivation, inspiration and positive energy on the Greensburg Y Swim Team, there is a ready and willing swimmer to fill that need..... Carly Szmyd. She has been a competitive swimmer since the age of 7. When she joined our team at the age of 11, GYST gained a tough competitor and a whole lot more.

As a GYST swimmer, she holds two State Championship 1st place titles in the 50 and 100 butterfly. She has been a top place winner in the IM and freestyle events at Y States and of course she is always a fierce addition to any of our relays helping them to always finish in the top 6 at States. She has also been a 5 time Y National qualifier and competitor.

But even more important than Carly's swimming accolades is the fact that she has the ability to energize her teammates and even her coaches. She demonstrates a passion for the sport and a positive attitude toward practice, competition and winning that sets her apart. Her enthusiasm at meets is contagious. The year that she set her goal to become the state champ, she arrived at the meet with an unstoppable determination and her goal time for the 50 fly boldly displayed in black marker all over her body. That's not too unusual for swimmers, but when I saw that the time was over a second better than her best I was impressed with her tenacity and equally impressed that she came within hundredths of that time to clinch the state title. I began to notice that other swimmers were following her lead, setting goals and daring to achieve them.

Carly has been an asset to our team not just because she swims fast, but she constantly encourages and cheers on her teammates starting with those in her own division down to the youngest member of our team who can be seen smiling while he is swimming because Carly's at the end of his lane.

Carly shows a never ending display of spirit and enthusiasm among her teammates and even towards those she is competing against. It is for these reasons that the GYST coaching staff highly recommends Carly for the Pump McLaughlin Award.

GARET WESTON - Indiana YMCA

I am most pleased to provide this reference on behalf of Mr. Gareth Weston and nominate him on behalf of the Indiana YMCA Swim Team as a candidate for the Pump McLaughlin Award for Spirit and Enthusiasm. I can think of few student-athletes who would be more deserving of this honor, and it is with great pleasure to write this letter on his behalf.

Over the past ten-plus years we have all come to know Gareth quite well. He has grown to be not only a leader with our YMCA program, but a great deal more. He has become in many ways the "signature" performer for the Indiana YMCA. During that time, he has excelled in so many ways, different strokes and distances; he's an annual fixture on the award stand at both districts and states.

But also, he has become more than just a fine competitor; he has grown to be a positive leader among his peers, whether it is as a teammate or as an opponent. He's developed in to becoming an extension of the coaching staff. In a lot of ways, he's the 2nd coming of Josh Barthlow, the initial winner of the award when it was first presented a week before Pump's passing. Josh spoke volumes for Butler and Pump; Gareth does the same for the Indians Piranhas.

Gareth will be heading to Clarion in the fall, and he will undoubtedly leave his mark there, as he has in Indiana and western PA YMCA swimming. I speak volumes on behalf of the Indiana County YMCA Piranha family for our support of Gareth for the 2007 "Pump Award."