

Editor's Note

Planet Swim



Stephanie Ganey Photography

The other day, some friends and I were talking about how different our lives were since we'd started swimming. Everyone had a different story about how they'd come to join our local Masters group. I started because I wanted to do a triathlon but I hadn't swum competitively since childhood. Someone else said his wife, an accomplished swimmer, had introduced him to it. Several joined because they saw adults in the pool when they took their kids to swim practice and thought, "Hey, that looks like fun."

Regardless of how we came to be part of our local club, everyone agreed: Even if they couldn't remember the exact moment or reason they decided to join, it was one of the best decisions they'd ever made. And they weren't referring to winning medals or being in the best shape of their lives—they were referring to the people they'd met along the way.

In U.S. Masters Swimming's annual push to have April recognized as Adult Learn-to-Swim Month, much is made about the physical health benefits of swimming. Not only because learning to swim can literally save your life, but also because once you learn, you can use it as a lifelong form of healthy exercise. With more adults jumping in the pool for the first time, it's important for this information to get out.

But it's really exciting to think about what these new swimmers will be talking about a few years down the road. Sure, if they stick with it, they'll get healthier—that part's inevitable. But if they're fortunate enough to have a fun group of like-minded adults in their community, they'll find out soon how the social benefits of swimming come into play.

For many, joining a Masters club is like a reunion—as if all the people from your planet have been waiting for you to arrive, but your ship was delayed, and then it took you a while to find them on Earth. I still haven't figured out why this phenomenon persists, despite thinking, reading, and writing about it a lot.

The camaraderie thing is understandable for the lifelong swimmers—shared memories of green hair, predawn workouts, and wearing pajama pants to school—but what is it about discussions during the morning kick set on topics such as the welcome-to-50 colonoscopy that makes people open their homes and their hearts to people they've just met?

At the risk of too much navel-gazing, I continue to believe that there's something special about the people who are attracted to this sport. Or maybe chlorine creates some sort of covalent bond, in which swimmers with completely different backgrounds share the awesomeness and generosity-of-spirit electrons. Who knows?

Regardless, I continue to enjoy meeting people from Planet Swim, even by just reading about them in the pages of *SWIMMER* and at usms.org.

In this issue, we meet two swimmers, Mark Grashow (page 9) and Taylor Krauss (page 18), who both, for different reasons, felt pulled to the African continent. There they've made significant differences in the lives of those affected by extreme poverty or violence.

We also meet swimmer Nancy Prouty (page 30), a scientist studying deep-sea corals to unlock the mysteries of Earth's oceans—a world farther away, in terms of understanding, than the moon.

At usms.org, you'll meet swimmer Tselane Gardner, whose learn-to-swim journey led her from personal trauma to teaching others.

If you're new to Masters Swimming, welcome; we're glad you're here.

Laura Hamel, Editor-in-Chief

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ON THE COVER

Heide Crino, 48, of the Sarasota Sharks Masters product testing the Nikon 1 AW1. *SWIMMER* editor Laura Hamel shot the image with the SeaLife Micro HD+. See underwater camera reviews on page 40.

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