

USMS 2023 RELAY - Susan Furkin, Ozark LMSC Representative

Day 1 mixer/dinner

Met Kevin Brown, Carol (Cat) Nip, several others from San Francisco area/Pacific LSC.

For the ice breaker exercise, I wrote "1500m long course top 10" as my accomplishment, but no one new found me. For my first person, I needed to find a person named Bill Meier, but I was unable to find him during the mixer. The second person I got was Dawson Hughes. His biggest accomplishment was doing La Jolla rough winter at the La Jolla children's pool with his mother back in the 90s. He said it was FREEZING! I've been swimming in that cove before, the surf was huge that day.

At dinner, I sat with a lot of Pacific people. Carol and I talked about pentathlons. She has put one on in Albany, CA for several years. We discussed prizes for age group lowest time....towels, hats, etc. Also talked about beer sponsor/limited edition cans.

There was a guy at our table who will be giving a presentation tomorrow. He is the founder of "grown ups swimming" which is pretty much a summer rec league for adults. They race 25s and 50s and it is fun. They operate in nine (maybe seven) cities, including Atlanta and Nashville. I think this could work well in STL... outdoor pools at Shrewsbury, Webster, Fenton, Lake of the Woods, Indian Hills, Country Hill, White Cliff, etc. Also Illinois....Columbia, Waterloo, Hiltoppers.

Bill Brennan came by and said hello. I told him I had met him on Zoom for level I certification and was looking forward to level 2-3. He said there will be one in Phoenix in February, so I'm gonna try to go to that.

Kenny Brisbin came by and said hello, too. I told him I had emailed him a couple of years ago when I was in L.A., and he remembered! I don't think I will get a chance to see his presentation on Sunday morning because my flight leaves early. But we did discuss that it is nice to go to meets where music is played and there is an announcer doing a play by play of the heats and announcing names.

Saturday

Sat with people from South Dakota, Southern Pacific, and Indiana for breakfast

Volunteer 101 session

Ian and Britta broke down the different levels of USMS - club, LMSC, zone, national level. Discussion about volunteering opportunities. They said each zone would have knowledge of their specific needs (ex officials, chairs, coaches)

Talked to Mariam Lynch from Howard University in DC. She serves as a diversity and inclusion officer with USMS. She is trying to get a college club going that is separate from the school/NCAA team. Then Brian from grown-up swimming gave a presentation about his company/rec league. I am very excited about this. Made lots of notes above after dinner

yesterday.

Ed Coates talked about the new mission, vision, and goals of USMS.

Break #1 - talked to Jill Gallety from Gulf and two students from the college club team at Texas A&M. They have 140 swimmers and go to meets all over Texas. Do we have anything like this in STL? I think Wash U does. It sounds awesome! Maybe could get something going at SLU or Lindenwood? A good way to feed the funnel to Masters. They do a student fee of \$20, which is very doable.

First session I attended was about sanctioning. Nicole Christensen & Jacky Merianos presenting. The jeopardy parody was cool in theory but fell short in execution in that we only got like eight questions/scenarios due to time, and it was just a lot of information. But, there was lots of good information about getting ready to host a meet. Six steps to planning. Secure a facility, lock in key players (officials, announcer, etc), prepare announcement and submit sanctioning paperwork, promote event, meet day to-do, and post meet tasks/submit tasks. I made a lot of written notes, but some main take aways included seeking volunteers from other organizations like Lions or Rotary, offer early bird registration discount, bring a flash drive for backup results and also email yourself the results.

Second morning session was for open water events. Another great presentation, they recommended to start planning 9-12 months ahead of time. There is a lot of information online at open water central. One thing different for open water is a safety plan, also need an arial view of the course for sanctioning. Additional officials include safety director and open water referee. For permits, need to find out WHO controls the body of water...county, city, sheriff's dept? EMS and off duty police will most likely also be required. Find out if can put buoys in day before or if must wait until race day. Position boats on exterior of course. Get multiple bids for professional timing system- this will also automatically keep track of your swimmers and ensure that everyone who entered the water, exited the water.

I talked to multiple people and got contact info/business cards at the second session. Katherine from upstate NY, Marcia Cleveland from Chicago and is a chair. Frank Cortese from Dallas who does a lot of events and has catered to both USMS and triathlon. David Smith from Oklahoma, who would like to do a "Route 66" event with various open water events along Route 66 for the 100th anniversary in 2026. Maybe a fun distance option of 0.66? The YMCA has the Trout Lodge in Potosi, and I would like to work with them about getting an open water event going again in July 2024. The Y is also appealing to partner with because they have certified lifeguards already.

Talked to Barb Protzman who has run over 100 meets in Baltimore and Ft Lauderdale, including USMS nationals in 2000. She was very helpful.

Afternoon session was led by Jeff Commings and Tim Waud. I was in a group with Breadbasket and Oceania zones. There was one gal from MOVY, one from Indiana, one from Hawaii, and

then a bunch of people from Pacific. Jeff is directing his first meet next year, and he said Arizona LMSC had an event director checklist on their website that he found pretty helpful. He went to the websites of all LMSC and 19/51 had any information for event directors. Pacific and Indiana had the best. Could be something OZ could add to their website? The discussion was about what LMSC could do to support event directors. Financial was a big portion of that, ask for a grant or to pay for some up front costs like facility rental.

Mentorship was also discussed a lot - like really coaching and helping a first time director, then they should be able to do more of it on their own the second time, and be confident on their third event. I know I would benefit from a mentor in this capacity. I spoke to multiple people about this and got six email/phone numbers and they said I could reach out any time with a question.

Mentorship for officials, especially ones just starting out. Maybe they should shadow first to get an idea of the job. One event director said she does a zoom meeting with the officials two days prior to event, then they meet again 30 minutes before competition starts.

Mentor/teach a person to use meet manager. Have them sit next to the person manning the console and just watch and ask questions. I have had trouble with this....I have reached out to a few people in STL and was told no because I wasn't affiliated with the organization.

Some other cool ideas from the session included waving registration fee for a first time competitor/new USMS member. (They pay, but get reimbursed if they compete in the meet)

On registration, offer an option to have a buddy or to be a buddy. First time competitors would be paired up with a buddy to help them navigate the event...warms ups, the ready whistle, etc. Just some one to answer their questions and show them around.

Marcia Cleveland in Chicago has a meet at one of the practice pools during practice. Since they are already paying for THAT time and have THAT slot, they just extend it an hour to have more time.

Offer a prize for competitor who swims closest to their seed time (\$25 gift card if within .01 seconds).

For open water, have a youth wave, offer a para wave. Let the swimmers sort themselves by time/pace and not age.

Test the water early and again day of race so that if a person does get sick after, you have a record that the water levels were safe.

Offer open water distances that include sprint, Olympic, and ironman. Or maybe 1 mile or 3k or 400 yard.

If doing a charity event, reach out to the charity asap. They should have a person who will reach out for additional sponsors that they have worked with before.

If selling event shirts or caps, charge a sponsor to put their name/logo.

Make sure the computers at the meet are compatible with each other/software being used.

Send survey out after event to get feedback.

If use Club Assistant for registration, you will have an automatic email list of everyone who signed up, so that you can reach out to them to let them know about future events.

I received a pair of Finis goggles for speaking on behalf of my group.

Over lunch, there were six presentations by six different people who have hosted some really fun, nontraditional events.

Celia Wolff in NC does a funvitational. It includes relays with fins and inner tubes. A few "real events" like 50s or 4 x 25 free relay. Focus is on family/social aspect. Afterwards, they have a picnic in a park with a food truck or ice cream. I would like to implement something like this at the YMCA.

Peter Guadagni in California does an all relay meet. It includes real relay events plus fun ones with sweat shirts, tubes, or fins. Again, goal is fun/social and is a good way to generate interest in swimming.

Last session we went around in groups to talk to different groups of people. I was in a group who spoke with LMSC officers. Michael Carlson is chair in Indiana, and he is currently mentoring the women who is set to take over chair next year, so she will be set up for success. Mentorship was a theme again with everyone I talked to.