

PONY EXPRESS SWIM TEAM

STINGRAYS

FAMILY HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Pony Express Swim Team (PEST). This is our 7th year as a registered USA Swimming competitive swim team. USA Swimming (or USS) is the governing body of amateur swimming in the United States and the organization that sends our country's best swimmers to the Olympics. The only requirements to join our team are the ability to swim a 25-yard freestyle (the length of the pool) and a desire to improve your stroke techniques.

HEAD COACH

We are proud to announce that our Head Coach, Amanda Cook, was awarded Coach of the Year in 2009! She has been coaching the Stingrays since its beginning in 2003, although she began her coaching career several years earlier in high school. Amanda began swimming competitively at the age of five, and continued through high school, where she broke seven school records, one of which she continues to hold. Her philosophy on competitive swimming is, "We work hard and enjoy the results of our training. Swimming is a demanding sport, but if you are prepared to work hard, the results will certainly surprise you." Her goal is to teach all swimmers to set and achieve their own personal goals; learn respect for themselves, their teammates, and other swimmers; and to learn and improve each stroke one lap at a time. She produces workouts to enhance the skills and stroke technique needed to excel in each event that the swimmer competes. Water safety and learning teamwork in an individual sport are taught and encouraged during each practice. However, the most important part of swimming competitively is to have FUN!!

MISSION STATEMENT

The Pony Express Swim Team (PEST) offers a competitive swimming program for St. Joseph and the surrounding area. We provide an opportunity for all swimmers, regardless of age or ability, to reach their highest potential as both a person and an athlete, while developing a team that embraces the Olympic ideals of integrity, friendship and fair competition. We are committed to helping our swimmers grow in character, physical fitness and skill.

TEAM ORGANIZATION

PEST is a youth program operated by the PEST Board of Directors. This board consists of Sandy Burg (Co-Founder/Chairman of the Board), Andrea McKinley (Co-Founder/Treasurer), Christine Eckhardt (Secretary), Hazel Lawson, Karla Hanlan, Debbie Gach, Jim Laws and Jay Butler, along with the head coach. Board meetings will be held approximately six times throughout the season and will be posted on the website. Although only board members can vote at the meetings, all adult PEST members may attend. Your ideas are always welcome at these meetings, but we ask that you send all topics to Sandy Burg via e-mail at least one week prior to the meeting so she can schedule it on the agenda. All pertinent information will be sent via email after these meetings.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents are essential to a successful team! The team expenses cannot be covered on the fee structure alone. Special events allow the swim team to pay for expenses without raising fees to an excessive amount. This year we have three fund-raisers planned—Southside Fall Festival (9/18-9/20); All Seasons Candle Sale (November); and Red Wheel (February). Each family is expected to sign-up for one shift at the Southside Festival. A portion of all individual sales earnings from All Seasons and Red Wheel will go to the swimmer's account to be used for meet fees, travel, equipment, etc. The swimmer's portion of the fundraisers needs to be used up during the current calendar year (one year from the date of the last fundraiser of the season). When all families are involved, the events are more fun and the work is balanced evenly for everyone. Other events may include hosting swim meets, selling concessions, doing a swim-a-thon, etc. In addition to helping at fund-raisers, we need parents to assist in timing or judging at meets, as deemed necessary by the coach or meet director.

We require each family to volunteer at least 8 hours per season, or pay \$10/hour for any hours not completed. You may complete your hours at our fund-raisers, or timing/judging at meets. It is your responsibility to promptly notify the volunteer coordinator, Debbie Gach, www.dlgach@sbcglobal.net, as your hours are completed. If you volunteer as a committee chairperson or assistant chairperson for the Southside Festival, Candle Sale, Red Wheel, or Team Suit orders, your obligation will automatically be completed.

We also require each family to sell \$150 of Candles or Red Wheel products, or pay 30% of any amount of the \$150 not sold. For example: The Smith family volunteers 6 hours throughout the season, and sells \$60 of candles and \$40 of Red Wheel. They would be billed \$20 for the balance of the volunteer hours and \$15 ($\$150 - \$100 = \$50 \times 30\% = \15) for the balance of the fund-raising obligation. Please understand that we are not criticizing those who choose to pay rather than participate in the fund-raisers. We are simply asking everyone to do their part. We understand you may prefer to make a payment rather than sell the items, which is fine, but we do ask that you try to fulfill the volunteer commitment, if at all possible, because the team is required to supply timers and judges at the meets we attend.

CANCELLATION OF PRACTICE

Occasionally it is necessary to cancel practice due to illness, an out of town meet, or unsafe pool conditions. The coach will remind swimmers when the cancellation is scheduled in advance. If the SJSJSD cancels school due to weather conditions, we will cancel practice, unless we notify you otherwise. If practice is cancelled the day of practice for any other reason (i.e. a problem with the pool), we will leave a message on the team phone line (238-7122) and send out an e-mail, so you should get in the habit of checking these daily before practice.

COMMUNICATION

E-mail will be the primary mode of communication, so please make sure we have a current address that is checked often. Since every swimmer is not at any one practice, we have found this is the best way to keep parents informed of team events. Also, there is a black box

located by the equipment door in the pool area that has a folder for each swimmer. This needs to be checked weekly for any handouts, forms, etc. There is also a folder for payments of monthly fees, or they may be mailed to the address on the front page.

MEETING WITH THE COACH

Parents are encouraged to communicate with the coaches if they have any questions. Please make attempts not to interrupt practice time to discuss matters; try to schedule another time to talk to the coach, or talk with him or her before or after practice. Actual practice time is not an appropriate time as it takes the attention away from the swimmers. Parents may call Coach Amanda anytime on her cell (261-7624) or home phone (232-4734). The Board of Directors is available to answer any questions regarding the business of the team.

MEETS

All the meets we attend are sanctioned through USA Swimming. Typically, there will be 10-30 clubs represented at these meets with hundreds of swimmers participating. They usually run all day on Saturday and Sunday, and sometimes include Friday evenings. The events are divided in two segments based on age groups, so that any given swimmer will swim either morning or afternoon. You will not need to stay for both sessions. Many of our meets are held in and around the Kansas City area, but are not limited to that area.

The coaches will decide which events to enter the swimmer based upon their ability. Often the coach will enter a swimmer in an event that will challenge them to become a better swimmer; however, these events may not always be the swimmer's favorite. Please understand that the coach is only trying to train your swimmer to be the best swimmer they can be.

All meets that we are attending will be posted on the calendar on the team's website www.pestswimming.com . On that calendar there will be listed the dates of the upcoming swim meets as well as a due date of when Coach Amanda needs to be notified of your swimmers attendance for that meet. After the Coach sends the total due for the meet fees for your swimmer via email, the meet fees will then need to be paid prior to the meet. ALL MEET FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE.

THE FIRST MEET

You must remember your suit, cap, goggles and towel. Sleeping bags, chairs, sweats, MP3 players, iPods, playing cards or other games are a good idea to keep you busy and warm in between your events. Some families bring a small cooler with healthy snacks along too. The indoor pools are pretty warm so you may want to dress in layers rather than just winter clothes.

Most meets offer T-shirts for sale along with concessions and various swimming supplies. A "meet program" will be for sale that includes the list of events and names of all the swimmers swimming each event and lists their entry time. It will also tell approximately when the events will be swum.

Swimmers will need to be at the clerk of course when their event is called. The coach will be on deck to encourage the swimmers. It is up to the parent to get the kids to the clerk of course on time. Swimmers will then be sent to the deck and lane at the appropriate time. Other team members and parents will be helpful also. The coach will want the swimmers to come talk to her after each event they swim.

Before you attend each meet you will want to check with the coach for the time of warm-ups. Your swimmers will need to be at the meet at least 15 minutes before this time to stretch before they enter the water. Parents make sure your child is stretched and on-deck at the appointed time of warm-ups. Late arrivals cause confusion in the workout. Warm-up times on a Saturday of a meet may not be the same for Sunday.

DISQUALIFICATIONS (DQ'S)

At any meet, including at championship meets, a swimmer may be disqualified (DQ) for a false start, illegal stroke, or an illegal turn. New swimmers should realize that this happens to everyone at some time. They should use this as a way to learn how to improve on their swimming. (Parents remember—DQ stands for Dairy Queen!!) If a swimmer has been disqualified during an event, a judge will make an attempt to talk to the swimmer as he gets out of the water and let him know what he did wrong. Any questioning of a disqualification needs to go to the coach who will follow proper procedure if there needs to be further questioning. Parents should not go to the officials with these questions.

TIME STANDARDS

For each stroke (fly, back, breast, and free) and distance (50, 100, etc.) and each age group and sex, there is a national specific time standard to determine C, B, and A status. Time standards for all strokes, distances, ages, and sex can be found at the back of this handbook and at the Missouri Valley website (www.missourivalleyswimming.com). At all meets, swimmers are divided into "heats" that are run from slowest heat to the fastest heat. Each swimmer is seeded into the heat and lane assignments (different for each event they are scheduled to swim) by the club sponsoring the meet. Heat and lane assignments are arranged so that each swimmer is actually swimming against other swimmers of similar ability and of the same age and sex. Since the fastest heats are swum last, it is possible to win an early heat and still not place in that event. You will find time standards for Division I & II. Swimmers with a high C and B national times may qualify for Division II at season's end. Likewise, high B to low A times will probably qualify for Division I. Only qualified swimmers are invited to the Division Championships. In addition to Division times, Missouri Valley also has Level I & II time standards, which are somewhat easier to obtain. This gives a broader group of swimmers an opportunity to attend the Level I or II championship meet.

EXAMPLE:

Girls, 10 & under, 50 yard freestyle
A Time: 32.39 B Time: 40.09 C Time: any time longer than 40.09
Div I Time: 33.19 Level I Time: 32.39
Div II Time: 41.19 Level II Time: 48.59

AWARDS

Awards are generally given to swimmers at meets, but not always. There are usually 6-8 ribbons awarded to the 1st-6th (or 8th) places in the C category for each event swam at the meet. The same is true for B and A categories. Occasionally medals are awarded depending on the type of meet, host club, etc. Some meets provide "heat winner" and "best personal time" iron-on decals. Official results of each event are posted on the wall near the pool area shortly after the event is completed, and are listed on the website within a few days. Awards are given to the coach who will hand them out at a later practice. A swimmer or parent should keep a record of their times.

MEET FEES

The monthly and annual fees are for USA Swimming registration, coaching, pool rental and equipment expenses. They do not include meet fees, which are set by the team hosting the meet, plus our team's cost of sending a coach. Meet fees must be paid before the meet and should be paid to Andrea McKinley in a check separate from the monthly practice fees. Meet fees are usually \$3.50 for each event entered, plus a \$15.00 (coaches' fee). The coaches' fee pays for the salary and expenses of the coach while at the meet. Championship meets and meets that are out of the Kansas City area may have higher fees, which we will notify you of as soon as possible.

If you enter a meet and then have to "scratch" for any reason, the fees are non-refundable. Your swimmer will only be entered in the meets that you listed on the meet sign-up sheet given at the beginning of the season. You may only make changes (adding or deleting a meet/day) by notifying Coach Amanda Cook via e-mail at least 3 weeks prior to the meet. In a situation where the event is for a relay and one swimmer must scratch, that swimmer is expected to pay the fees for the other three members of the relay team for that event.

TEAM SUITS

Our team colors are red and black. It is nice to have a team suit to wear for meets, but not required. It is required for championship meets for each swimmer to wear a team suit and cap. Most swimmers have practice suits so that their team suit lasts longer. Group orders will be taken for team suits and practice (grab-bag) suits at the beginning of the season to get a discounted price. Parents should keep their eyes out for a good sale as swimmers wear their practice suits out fairly rapidly. Many meets have suits at discounted prices. Ask some club members if you want some more help.

LONG AND SHORT COURSE

Aren't all pools the same? Definitely not! During the winter season (September through March) practice and meets are usually in 25-yard (and sometimes 25-meter) pools. This is the "short course" season. The term "long course" season usually comes in the summer. A long course is 50 meters (or yards). Olympic swimming events are swum in 50-meter pools. The

MWSU pool is 25 yards, but the St. Joseph YMCA pool is 25 meters. Times achieved in either length pool can be converted to the other.

ANNUAL AND MONTHLY FEES

The annual USS membership fee (\$51) covers the swimmer with accident insurance and officially registers him with USA Swimming. Also, members of USA Swimming receive a year subscription to Splash Magazine. The team does not receive any part of this fee, nor does the team set the fee amount. After registration, each swimmer will receive a registration number, which is a requirement for entering any swim meet in the United States. The policy of Missouri Valley Swimming is that a person will not be allowed to switch teams until fees are paid in full for the time they swam with the previous team.

There is an annual team fee of \$55 per swimmer or \$75 per family. The monthly fee is \$65 per swimmer (\$55 for 2nd swimmer and \$50 for the 3rd and \$45 for each additional swimmer in the same family). The fee for the Little Rays (Coach Amanda will determine if your swimmer is a Little Ray) is \$45 per month. All practice fees are due on the 1st of the month and should be paid to Andrea McKinley. If not paid by the 10th of the month, a \$10 late charge per swimmer will be assessed, and the swimmer will not be able to practice with the team until fees are paid. All new swimmers have a two-week trial period to decide on their status. If during that two-week period the new swimmer decides not to continue, then the USA Membership Fee, Annual Team Fee and ½ the practice fee will be refunded. After the two-week trial period, all fees are non-refundable.

If the swimmer decides to stop swimming, or will not swim for a month or two during the season, please notify Andrea McKinley and Coach Amanda Cook. This will eliminate any bookkeeping errors and help the coach update practice schedules.

ATTENDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Attendance at practice is important for a swimmer to develop competitively. The swimmer should participate fully in each workout, for the designated time. If the need arises where a swimmer needs to leave for another appointment, that swimmer's parent should let the coach know prior to practice so they can make arrangements for the swimmer to cool-down before exiting the pool. It is expected that the swimmer will arrive at practice in a timely manner to participate fully according to the coach's workout. Warm up and cool down times are very important to a workout.

The general philosophy of swimming and other similar sports with high demand on time and energy is "you get out of it what you put in to it". As a swimmer's ability in the sport increases, a greater demand of time and effort will be placed on the swimmer. A high rate of attendance is encouraged if you are to progress accordingly. The coach makes their workout according to the swimmer's ability, and expects that swimmer to work on increasing their ability to become a physically better swimmer for a competitive purpose. Workouts are often planned to prepare for a particular meet. The coaches will tell you that to benefit from their workout plan, you should attend every workout in their program. We realize that this is not always possible with

other demands and priorities in family life. Parents, if you have questions, please do not question the coach during practice, but wait until after practice, if possible.

The coaches are responsible for the swimmers and their actions during practice, so "roaming" the building will not be tolerated. The swimmer is expected to arrive, change, and be on deck at the specified time. Swimmers are not allowed on deck until one of the coaches is present.

Parents are expected to pick-up swimmers within 15 minutes of the end of practice—not the end of changing/showering. The coach will stay 15 minutes after practice has ended. If the swimmer needs more time to finish, the parent must come in to supervise so the coach may leave. The team will assess a fee of \$15 for every 15 minutes the parent is late.

PRACTICE SCHEDULE

All of our pool practices are held at Missouri Western State University. We will be practicing Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm. Please respect MWSU's property, as we are guests in their pool. Only use the circle drive to drop-off and pick-up your child, not for parking. During home basketball games, MWSU will not allow us to park in the lot closest to the building. Although you certainly may attend every practice, we don't expect swimmers to be at every session. We try to offer as many practice sessions as possible to fit your schedule. Obviously, your swimming skills will greatly improve as practice is increased, but that should be determined by the parent and swimmer.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COACHES:

Amanda Cook, Head Coach, 232-4734 home, 261-7624 cell, amax@stjoelive.com

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The Pony Express Swim Team would like to acknowledge the following people and businesses for their contribution to our team.

Representative Ed Wildberger, who was the only elected official to assist the team in our 1st season to secure pool space for practice. Without him and his dedication to the youth of this town, this team would never have existed.

Mary Scott, C.P.A. has donated time to advise the team on financial matters and tax issues.

Ivle Beason donated countless hours custom building our starting blocks.

A & I Welding donated use of all the tools necessary to construct the blocks.

Missouri Iron & Metal donated all the materials used in the construction of the blocks.

Dr. Cain Orthodontics, Herzog Contracting and **Carl Nurski** donated money to pay for the starting blocks.

Fusemail, Altec, Herzog, CarQuest, Weyerhaeuser, Orthodontist Dr. David Lebsack, Dr. Mignon Makos, Boehringer Ingelheim, Collision Repair and Eye Candy Graphic Art Studio donated money and services to help the team.