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## Lafayette Swim Conference Plunges into First Year

*Cathy Dausman*

There will be a new conference on the starting blocks this year at recreational swim meets in Lamorinda. The newly-formed Lafayette Swim Conference (LSC) will serve more than 1,000 swimmers in five swim clubs: the Lafayette Moraga Youth Association (LMYA), Oakwood Athletic Club, Rancho Colorados, Springbrook and Sun Valley pools. Gayle Burleigh and Lauren Webster will serve jointly as board co-presidents for the LSC, which begins on June 9. The LSC conference began as the result of multiple poolside conversations among board members from several clubs: Ted Liu (Sun Valley), Kaaren Brickman (Springbrook), Kristi Buck (LMYA), Jon Wheeler and Carol Spiering (Rancho Colorados), and Mike Millimen (Oakwood). They then presented the idea to their respective clubs. Last July, LSC held its first official meeting; by October bylaws were in place.

"[It] probably surprised a lot of people," says Liu in reference to the fact the conference was up and running within a year. Wheeler agrees, saying the organization did an "unbelievable job getting going."

Still, Wheeler wonders about growing pains this year, but says, "by year three, this will be so great."

Those familiar with Lamorinda's swim culture know the idea of a no-cut summer sport open to children ages 5 to 18 has broad appeal. Spiering says recreational swimming is a sport in which the whole family can compete. "Your kids can grow up at swim club," she says.

Buck says LSC wants to be inclusive for swimmers of every ability level, and wants to make its program a positive experience, especially for teens.

In addition to offering more awards, LSC has decided not to score dual meets. It is doubling the number of competitors eligible for final swim rounds. LSC will also emphasize out-of-pool socializing. The conference has scheduled a Bay Area beach cleanup for its members, and a trip to a Concord waterpark. To kick off the season, LSC will host a teen social (tacos, and live DJ music, \$15 per person) at Rancho Colorados Pool on June 21.

Only Lafayette's Las Trampas pool will not join LSC in 2012. Swim team co-director Kevin Strohmeier says that Las Trampas has been well-served by the Diablo Community Swim League for over 50 years.

However, Strohmeier is excited for the other programs. "We have been in contact with the founding teams of the new league and are excited about many of the ideas we have heard and will continue to watch the development of the new league/conference as we continually assess the needs of our team."

League co-president Gayle Burleigh says, "This year is our beta test to work out all the kinks. We hope that the other Lafayette team will join us and we have had discussions with Pleasant Hill [Swim Club] to have them join us in 2013 as well."

Wheeler predicts the LSC inaugural season will be "the beginning of magic."

Lafayette Swim Conference is not yet online, but expects to have its website running next month

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