

## Why Should We Support an Indoor Community Pool? Dorothy Schiessl - Kearsarge, NH

Growing up in the 1940's and 50's, at some point I persuaded my parents to allow me to take summer swim lessons at a far off lake in western New York. Many years later in college, I selected swimming to fulfill a PE requirement and became somewhat proficient in all of the strokes.

Because I enjoyed the activity and for the safety of my children, and for their safety as adults, I made certain that each of them learned to swim. They each learned in an indoor facility with certified instructors. Today, in their forties, they continue to swim recreationally and for aerobic conditioning.

Four of my eight grandchildren are competitive swimmers. Soon there will be five. At three, my youngest grandson can jump into the deep end of a pool and swim to the side. These children were all introduced to swimming in Learn to Swim programs and have advanced their skills by being able to join swim clubs in their areas where they swim/compete for almost eleven months of the year.

Some swimmers choose not to compete but swim for fun and fitness. Without an indoor facility, none of this would be possible except for a couple of summer meets. For some ten years I have been traveling to the central New York area to cheer on the grandchildren at swim events. Depending on the ages, these meets run from September through April. Some of the meets are school meets, others are club events. The meets are exciting and fast-paced. At a club event, children from about the age of five through age twenty compete. At a two-day event a thousand kids will swim. Swimmers can earn heat ribbons, team points and place ribbons. Swimmers soon learn that getting a personal best time beats getting a ribbon. I have observed a coach assist his/her physically disabled swimmer to the blocks and stay at their side until the start. I have watched developmentally disabled children and young adults receive applause as they touch the wall at the finish.

Though personally biased, I am convinced that the sport of swimming has benefits that no other youth or adult sport provides. It develops the entire body. It is low impact to the body making it a lifelong activity. No one gets tackled, hit or tripped; beaten yes, but never beat-up. It promotes friendly competition. Swimmers get to talk to each other and often become friends with those they swim against. It enhances performance in other sports such as running, track and field events, soccer and skiing. It keeps the body in shape year round. Kids of all shapes, sizes and abilities can compete. All swimmers on a varsity or modified team get to swim. No one sits the bench. It instills a strong work ethic and commitment. It promotes a lifelong activity that will aid in maintaining good health in years to come.

An indoor facility would provide an atmosphere where the young, middle-aged and the seniors of our community could come together to enhance and promote healthy pool programs. As a senior citizen, I now find myself in a position where I can no longer continue my favorite work-out program. What will I turn to that I learned to do sixty years ago? I'll swim for good health. The concept of an indoor swimming facility in this great valley is a no brainer. So get on the blocks and dive in. We have everything to gain:

1. Learning to swim
2. Better health
3. Being able to watch our awesome Saco Valley Swimmers compete