Welcome to our 39th year campaign – yes, 39 – and it has been an amazing ride for our outstanding physically challenged athletes and the entire SWM family. 38 years of incredible growth and success continue to shatter our expectations and this is only possible because of you, our generous volunteers, donors and USC campus partners.

This year the Swim With Mike Board of Directors voted to approve funding for 15 more exceptional scholarship recipients who meet our criteria for support:

• Have participated in organized, competitive sports
• Sustained a life-changing accident/illness
• Have been accepted to a four-year or grad level institution of higher education
• Maintain a 2.5 GPA

This brings our total to fifty recipients at 39 universities for the 2018-19 academic year. Since our 1981 inception, we have been honored to support a total of 231 scholarship recipients at 122 universities nationwide.

As we reflect on our scholarship recipient population, I thought you would like to know some more about what makes up this year’s class of physically challenged athletes.

Our new scholarship recipients hail from 11 different states who suffered predominately from spinal cord injuries incurred from dive, motorcycle, automobile, hunting accidents and also a terrorist attack.

This amazing group of individuals is comprised of 11 males and four females pursuing their degrees in higher education at 14 different universities including USC, Johns Hopkins, Stanford, MIT, Ohio State and Alabama.

And, while these statistics are impressive, the students we support are even more so. Please take a look at our new scholarship recipient profiles on the following pages to learn more, and see how these outstanding individuals just blow us away!

A drop, a ripple, a wave . . . making a difference for 39 years!

Ron Orr
Founder and Executive Director

P.S. Looking for that perfect gift for a friend or relative this Holiday Season? Consider the gift of education to support our Physically Challenged Athletes Scholarship Fund in honor of that special person. We will send an acknowledgement of your generous gift.

Curious, isn’t it, how the simple act of making a worthwhile donation can elicit such a range of feelings, emotions – and joys.

But that’s the way it is around here. And how it’s been for those 39 years. As we head toward year 40, our focus is on hoping to attract endowments, so that the work of Swim With Mike can continue in perpetuity.

We won’t be here forever. No one will. But there will always be a need. Which is why it’s so important that there will always be a Swim With Mike.
We were pleased to welcome new SWM scholarship family to join us, and Laura and Mark Bauer, new recipient Brad’s (U of Missouri, Business 2022) success and promise.”

We also had a visit from USC Head Football Coach Clay Helton. He surprised us all, but especially his team’s long snapper and SWM scholarship recipient Jake Olson (USC Business 2019). Coach followed Jake’s senior year update with a big hug and a most heartfelt endorsement of his support and sincere backing of our SWM mission and success.

Each year the Back to School Brunch is planned and executed by SWM Family Association’s co-founders Jennifer Johnson and Tom Fuelling. Jennifer, whose two nephews are SWM alumni recipients, arranges the details of the buffet which is graciously donated. And the icing on the cake – the Swim With Mike campaign as scholarship recipients, Daryl Holmlund, Gaby Martinez, Zack Collie, Edgar Rico, Spencer Fox, Greg Gardner, Zach Pickett, Austin Brotman, Chase Wagner, Hunter Garstin, Rocky Paneno, Tiffane King, Bea de Lavalette, Katie Polichuke, Jack Jablonski, Mahrokh Ebarahimi. All photos by Dan

Ron announced that Yvonne Bogdanovich will be our 2019 Claire Snow Volunteer of the Year awardee. Yvonne has been a tireless advocate for SWM and this award is certainly well deserved.

We were pleased to welcome new SWM scholarship recipient Hunter Garstin (Middle Tennessee State University, Psychology 2021) who traveled with his family to join us, and Laura and Mark Bauer, new recipient Brad’s (U of Missouri, Business 2022) parents, Scholarship recipient Abby Bennett (BYU, Physiology 2019) and her mom joined us from Utah, and Tyler Hoog’s (USC, Masters Screen & TV Writing 2019) mom joined us from Colorado.

“Tyler and I just love this inspiring event; it is such a celebration of the scholarship recipients’ success and promise.” said Kim Hoog.

Lots to eat, lots to celebrate, and lots and lots of people

What a kick off for our 39th year!

Daryl Holmlund, a Swim With Mike alum, entertained everyone at the brunch.
Meet the new Swim With Mike recipients

Amen Alyasiry  
Dearborn, MI  
University of Arizona  
B.S. Electrical Engineering  
Spring 2020  
L 1-2 Spinal Cord Injury  
Amen grew up in Detroit and played basketball starting at the age of five. At the age of 13 he was playing basketball in his front yard when he heard gunshots and within seconds found himself lying on the ground in extreme pain. He was paralyzed and in the hospital when he heard about wheelchair basketball and fell in love with the adapted version of his sport. He aspired to the highest levels and was thrilled to be admitted into the prestigious Electrical Engineering program at the University of Arizona.  

Brad Bauer  
St. Louis, MO  
University of Missouri, Columbia  
B.S. Business Management  
Summer 2022  
C 4 Spinal Cord Injury  
Brad played a variety of sports as a kid, including summer league swimming. When he started high school he had to decide and his parents encouraged him to go out for swimming. He was immediately successful and was encouraged to try water polo where he found his true calling. 

Austin Brotman  
Ladera Ranch, CA  
Stanford University  
B.S. Symbolic Systems  
Spring 2022  
C 6 Spinal Cord Injury  
At the age of five, Austin's mom dragged him to swim lessons and he hated every minute. But after two years he found his way in the water and came to love swimming. 

Abigail Curtis  
Independence, KY  
Cedarville University  
RNBSN Nursing  
Spring 2022  
Bilateral Paraplegia Lower Limbs  
Abigail was always an active child, participating in ballet, cheerleading, soccer, t-ball and cross country. She was diagnosed with idiopathic scoliosis when she was 11 years old. In September of 2012, she had a spinal fusion performed.

Beatrice de Lavalette  
Lake Worth, FL  
University of San Diego  
B.A. Entrepreneurial Business  
Bilateral Leg Amputee  
Spinal Cord Injury  
Born in France to American parents, Beatrice always wanted to be a professional athlete, riding horses since she was three. At the British School of Paris she ran track and high jumped; winning gold in high jump at the International Schools Sports Tournament European Championship. 

Gregory Gardner  
Lakewood, CA  
University of Southern California  
M.S. Computer Science  
Spring 2019  
L 1 Spinal Cord Injury  
Greg started his sports career in t-ball where he found that persistence brings success. He went on to play soccer, baseball and basketball. He also participated in karate, bowling and golf. He went on to star on the Valley Christian High School football team and was offered scholarships to several small colleges but decided his future would be better enhanced by concentrating on academics. Greg went on to major in Chemical Engineering at UC San Diego. 

In November 2015 he was riding quad motorcycles in the desert outside Las Vegas and crashed, breaking his left femur, right heel bone and bunt-fractured his L1 vertebrae. He spent three weeks in the hospital and then six months at Craig Hospital before returning home. He has been admitted to the USC Masters Program in Computer Science and plans on a career in the aerospace and defense industries.
Recipients - continued

MacDaniel Graff  
Pasco, WA  
Gonzaga University  
B.S. Kinesiology and Physical Education - Spring 2020  
Spinal Cord Injury, Paraplegia

Mac attended Chiawa High School where he played varsity football, track and golf. He was a scholar athlete in three sports, in 2014 at the beginning of his junior year Mac fell out of his tree stand while hunting with his dad, breaking his back. While unable to play, he continued to participate in practices and in the weight room, supporting the team and rehabilitating his body.

He learned to play wheelchair basketball and in his junior year went to the track state championship as a thrower and played in high school prior to June 17, 2015 when he woke with what he thought was a minor injury or fatigue. The next day he felt better but later the symptoms progressed rapidly and after being rushed to the emergency room he was diagnosed with Transverse Myelitis, an inflammatory disease of the spinal cord suffered by only 1400 people in the U.S each year. He missed nearly his entire sophomore year but developed an enthusiasm for academic excellence. Mac was awarded the Iowa Governor’s Scholar Award, National Honors Society President, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society as well as other academic awards. He is now a member of the disability advocate group at Hopkins, a scientific researcher at the medical center, and an admissions office volunteer.

Kale Hyder  
Davenport, IA  
Johns Hopkins  
B.S. Neuroscience - Spring 2022  
Transverse Myelitis ASIA D  
Spinal Cord Injury

Kale serves as a great example of a student-athlete. Beginning in first grade, he started to participate in cross country, basketball and track. His greatest success was in basketball where he played in high school prior to June 17, 2015 when he woke with what he thought was a minor injury or fatigue. The next day he felt better but later the symptoms progressed rapidly and after being rushed to the emergency room he was diagnosed with Transverse Myelitis, an inflammatory disease of the spinal cord suffered by only 1400 people in the U.S each year. He missed nearly his entire sophomore year but developed an enthusiasm for academic excellence. Kale was awarded the Iowa Governor’s Scholar Award, National Honors Society President, Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society as well as other academic awards. He is now a member of the disability advocate group at Hopkins, a scientific researcher at the medical center, and an admissions office volunteer.

Gabriela Martinez  
Los Angeles, CA  
University of Southern California  
M.S.W. Social Work  
Spring 2021  
C5 Spinal Cord Injury

Born and raised in East LA, Gaby grew up playing a variety of sports, but her favorite was always competitive swimming. At 13, during a family gathering, Gaby accidentally dove head first into a shallow pool, not realizing it was only four feet deep. She was knocked unconscious and woke up in the hospital, and was diagnosed with a C5 spinal cord injury.

After her injury, and with the help of family, friends and childhood swim team buddies, she found her way back to the pool and relearned how to swim. The water became a vital asset to her rehabilitation, and currently, she is strengthening her adaptive swimmer skills at the nearby Rose Bowl Aquatic Center. Gaby graduated with her B.A. in Sociology from Cal State L.A. and is now working on completing her Master of Social Work at USC, where she aspires to make a positive impact on marginalized communities.

James Pierce  
Lake Forest, CA  
Portland State University B.S. Mechanical Engineering  
Spring 2020  
T6 Spinal Cord Injury

Since the age of 10, Jim was into sports, starting with track, transitioning to swimming and triathlon and then getting into long/short distance obstacle course races. He graduated from Ramona High School in 2008 with a 3.5 gpa then went on to a career as a power liner apprentice.

Every day he would find himself climbing to the top of 50-foot power poles, surrounded by high voltage live electricity while completing mathematical calculations in his head. After a fall that resulted in a T6 complete spinal cord injury he realized a need to change course and began taking prerequisites for mechanical engineering. Encouraged by friends and family, he focused on fitness activities. Jim lifts weights, SCUBA dives and uses his mountain handcycle to go on hikes with friends. He married his girlfriend Carrie who was admitted to Oregon while he was admitted to nearby Portland State University and is the second Swim With Mike recipient to specialize in ADA consultation. Jon continues to pursue a bachelor’s degree in Construction Management with revised goal to specialize in ADA consultation that will allow individuals with disabilities to live and work barrier-free.

Jon Plazcz  
Englewood, CO  
Metropolitan State University - B.S. Architecture  
Spring 2023  
C4 Spinal Cord Injury

Jon grew up in a very athletic family and learned to skate before he could walk. Hockey was his sport and he played year-round while dabbling in baseball and football. In high school he was encouraged to try lacrosse and ended up winning the State Championship.

After graduation he went to work for his dad’s construction company and was able to get a try out for a junior hockey team. After three years at the junior level he earned himself a spot on the University of Wisconsin-Stout hockey team, but in the summer following his freshman year a moped accident resulted in a spinal cord injury and paralysis. While at Craig Hospital he learned about SWM and applied for a scholarship.

Aaron Stant  
Van Wert, OH  
Ohio State University  
B.S. Architecture  
Spring 2023  
Spinal Muscular Atrophy

Aaron developed a passion for the water when he began competitive swimming and looked forward to a successful high school swimming career. But at a summer meet he started a race and immediately knew something was wrong.

His lungs began to burn and he needed help getting out of the water. A neurologist gave him the bad news that he had spinal muscular atrophy.

So his competitive swimming career was over, but he started coaching youth swimming and also competed on the golf team. After his diagnosis he decided to stick with it even with all the challenges. Aaron is pursuing a degree in architecture with a minor in disability studies at Ohio State University and is the second Swim With Mike recipient to attend that prestigious school.

He will concentrate his studies on historical and modern architecture and appreciates SWM for giving him the opportunity.
Thomas Venos
Anmore, BC
University of Alabama
B.S. Kinesiology
Spring 2022
T 12 Spinal Cord Injury

Thomas is from Canada and started playing soccer at five. He played year-round and in his final season his team won the league cup. His second sport was baseball and he was a pitcher. He also participated in basketball, track, wrestling and volleyball and skied with his family.

At the age of 16 Thomas was in a dirt bike accident that resulted in paralysis from the waist down. While a patient at G F Strong Rehab Center he was introduced to adapted sports, first basketball and then tennis.

His strong arm from baseball translated quickly to a strong serve in tennis and less than two months after his injury Thomas was given the opportunity to play against some of the best juniors in the world. He went on to train with some of the best juniors in the world. He went on to train with some of the best juniors in the world.

Growing up in Indiana, Ben played soccer and basketball and attended Bob Jones University where he graduated in 2004 with a B.S. in Health, Fitness and Recreation and then on to work as an Outdoor Education Instructor in Brookston.

In September of 2006, he was in a motorcycle accident that left him a T 5-6 Paraplegic. After five weeks of intense therapy, he re-focused his life and his goals and started training in different sorts of adaptive sports.

Within seven months he pushed his first half marathon and has since competed in over 25 wheelchair marathons. His biggest accomplishment in distance competition came in 2016 when he was able to complete an Ironman triathlon in Louisville, KY. Ben attended Bethel College and completed his M.A. in teaching. Currently he works as a physical education teacher in Salt Lake City, UT and is pursuing his PhD in Psychology at Grand Canyon University.

Jessica (Duhon) Rodriguez
San Diego, CA
Concordia University, Chicago
PhD Health and Human Performance - Spring 2020
T 2-3 Spinal Cord Injury

Jessica grew up in Louisiana as the youngest of five children. She played high school varsity basketball and softball until one day in May 2003 when she was in a horrific automobile accident. At 16 years old she suffered a spinal cord injury at the T2/T3 level, resulting in paralysis.

That didn’t stop her from helping with coaching or graduating as valedictorian. In 2008 she transferred from LSU to Cal State San Marcos to attend Project Walk. She completed her bachelor’s degree in 2011 and moved on to San Diego State University for a master’s degree in Exercise Physiology and Nutritional Science in 2014.

Jessica began teaching Kinesiology as an adjunct instructor at CSUSM and SDSU in 2015 and at the University of Saint Katherine as an Assistant Professor of Kinesiology. In 2010 she met her now husband at the church they both attended. She is pursuing a PhD in Health/ Human Performance at Concordia University in Chicago.

Ben Hulin
Salt Lake City, UT
Grand Canyon University
PhD Psychology
Spring 2020
T 5-6 Spinal Cord Injury

Ben grew up in Indiana, Ben played soccer and basketball and attended Bob Jones University where he graduated in 2004 with a B.S. in Health, Fitness and Recreation and then on to work as an Outdoor Education Instructor in Brookston.

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Satellites, Endowments and more
Keeping the dream going!

Alumni Recipients Zach Pickett and Daryl Holmlund Take on the Waikiki Roughwater Swim

Another perfect day in paradise provided the 49th Annual Waikiki Roughwater Swim participants a good opportunity to challenge the surf in the 2.38 mile course that begins at Sans Souci Beach and ends at Duke Kahanamoku Beach.

For the last 13 years, Swim With Mike has been the official philanthropy that is supported by the Waikiki Roughwater organization. This is the first time that SWM scholarship recipients have participated, and Zach Pickett (USC Business 2018) and Daryl Holmlund (USC Masters Teaching 2012) gave the other swimmers a real swim for their money as they crossed the finish line just minutes apart!

Zach says, “This was a real challenge! I started training in mid-June and swam every other day until now (September 1). I only swim in pools so it was a little different. Going out and coming back it was a little rough. When we were coming back in, the current was pretty strong and the waves were pretty big, so we were pulled out with a big current or were getting pulled in with a huge wave crashing on top of you. So, it was little rough at the end.”

From Daryl: “This was my first trip to Hawaii, so we went out and previewed the course yesterday. We swam out to the shipwreck and saw turtles, and some small sharks. But today was a good challenge and I was very happy to be part of the competition.”

Another Swim With Mike alum, Joe Broc (Hawaii Pacific University Communications 2010) is currently an Education Assistant at the local Kahuku High School. He and his mom Cindy manned the Swim With Mike booth with the help of our good friend, Gordy Grundy, and handed out SWM swag to the swimmers and donors. Eighty-four generous donations were received at the event, and we thank you!

USC Yell Leader Alums Continue to Support Swim With Mike

Every year our loyal USC Yell Leader Alumni Group has supported SWM by swimming laps and collecting donations. This will be the group’s 25th year doing this for SWM! Earlier this year, the USC Yell Leader Alums are led by Troy Remelski (USC 2000) and current SWM Board member. 2019 will be a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of USC Yell Leaders. The group is planning a gathering of all alums so they can continue to break their lap record for the 25th consecutive year. Troy has already started spreading the word for all to join in the celebration on the weekend of April 6 and make the pilgrimage back to the USC pool to keep the ripple effect moving forward. If you are interested in sponsoring the Yell Leader Challenge, please contact Troy at troy@conquestmtg.com.

Thanks to all our Yell Leader friends and family, and to Jason Pilalas for his continued support!

Rosemary Kraemer Raitt Foundation Endows a Third Scholarship

Cheryl Hammond and John Kraemer, the generous trustees of the Rosemary Kraemer Raitt Foundation, have made another gracious gift to the Swim With Mike Physically Challenged Athletes Scholarship Fund by establishing their third Endowed Scholarship. This new gift will provide funds in perpetuity to one of our highly qualified scholarship recipients.

Each year, we will have three Rosemary Kraemer Raitt Endowed scholars representing the foundation, and for that we are most grateful.

John Kraemer tells us “We are pleased to announce that we will fund a third Swim With Mike endowed scholarship in the name of the Rosemary Kraemer Raitt Foundation. We believe that the Physically Challenged Athletes Scholarship Fund is enhancing lives in a truly meaningful way and we are proud to be part of that.”
Campaign Directors In Action

Third Annual SWM Bike-A-Thon in Utah

Abigail Bennett (Physiology 2019) and Kendra Muller (Neuropsychology 2019) are both Swim With Mike scholarship recipients attending BYU. They held their Third Annual Bike-A-Thon at Draper Park in Utah on July 21, and had about 50 bikers and runners participate and record their miles. In addition to having a lot of fun, they counted more than 300 miles covered to benefit Swim With Mike. Thanks, ladies!

From Abby: “What raising money for SWM means to me - I am so beyond grateful for all the SWM has done for me, and I am incredibly passionate about the Fund’s mission and what it stands for. I am happy to do my best to give back to this incredible organization.”

Kendra Says: “I love that I can be so involved and create a true community of support wherever I am. It’s truly incredible to explain what the bike-a-thon is for and see the individual reactions. “People that stop to ask are excited and very willing to help. We have gained so much support and I think that is because we are intimately connected with the foundation and people can see that we love it and aren’t just raising money for a cause that may be far away from our circle of the world.”

“Swim With Mike fundraisers have shaped me to continue to work hard and increase the awareness of the organization. I love sharing the Swim With Mike feeling!”

We are kicking off our 39th annual Fundraising Campaign to support physically challenged athletes and want you to be part of the fun as a Campaign Director.

As a Campaign Director, you will become our grassroots representative, reaching out to your online friends, schoolmates, neighbors, family and prospective sponsors to support your own fundraising campaign on behalf of our outstanding scholarship recipients.

Please visit the Swim With Mike website at swimwithmike.org to register – and while you are there, take a look at some of the other campaigns, such as the ones shown here, that are underway by other Campaign Directors. How about helping recruit another Campaign Director? Please let us know who we can contact by emailing us at swimwithmike@gmail.com.

Join the Wave!

The Dynamic Danville Duo

Scholarship recipients, lifelong friends and San Ramon High School graduates Katie Pasichuke (USC International Relations, Global Business 2020) and Jake Javier (Cal Poly SLO, Biomedical Engineering 2021) were each injured just one year apart – Jake broke his neck in 2016 after diving into a pool the night before his high school graduation and Katie crushed her vertebrae after falling off her neighbor’s balcony at USC a year later.

This past June, Katie and Jake hosted 250 friends and sponsors at their local swim club in Danville. Entrance fee was $5, and most guests generously contributed more.

Guests enjoyed a day-long Swim-A-Thon, and a featured event – The Biggest Splash Contest. The Biggest Splash Contest contestants donated $5 to participate, judges were Katie, Jake and one of their family friends. The Contest was a hit with everyone from 5 years old to college students, jumping in as friends, family and contest judges cheered them on.

There’s that Ripple Effect again!
Over $22 million raised in scholarship support since 1981

Scholarship dollars awarded for 2018-19: $961,949

2018-19 Scholarship Recipients: 50
(39 universities nationwide)

Total number of Swim With Mike scholarship recipients: 231

Total sports represented: 60

Total universities represented: 122

We could not have accomplished this without your help. Thank you!

Swim With Mike by the NUMBERS

COMING UP

Saturday, April 6 - 39th annual Swim With Mike,
USC Uytengsu Aquatics Center

Friday/Saturday, April 5 & 6, 2019 - SWM Wheelchair Basketball Tournament
presented by UBS in the Lyon Center at USC

Also in 2019:

Swim With Mike Rose Bowl Aquatics Center - March 29 - April 5 / 9th annual

Swim With Mike University of California San Diego - April 27 / 9th annual

Swim With Mike University of California Santa Barbara - TBA / 5th annual

Swim With Mike Hawaii - September 2 / 15th Annual (in conjunction with the 50th annual Waikiki Roughwater Swim)