

# Island Sports

## Islanders excited to swim for a good cause

By Adrienne Downing

Swimming conjures up images of sandy beaches, swimming pools and warm summer days for most people, but for the Newport Blues swim team, swimming is a year-round event.

The Blues are most of the way

through their winter season, which runs from September through March, and currently have a 5-1 record.

Especially strong for the team at the recent regional meet was Jamestown resident Blanca Zelaya, who is now in her seventh

season with the team.

She ranked in the top 10 swimmers overall and medaled in seven different events.

Zelaya also holds the Blues team record for the 200-meter backstroke with a time of 2:36.97, which she set this season. Ironically, she says that the backstroke is not the one she would pick as her favorite.

"I really like the butterfly the best," the soft-spoken swimmer said.

Gabriel Zelaya may be three years younger than his sister, but he is also making a name for himself on the team. Although he has only been with the team three years, he already holds three team records in the 100 and 200-meter freestyle and the 200-meter IM.

When asked what makes him such a good swimmer, he replied, "I swim a lot of laps."

Swimming laps is a great way for the team to stay in top form and to practice for their meets, but on Tuesday night they put their talent to work for the Rhode Island Red Cross.

Sixty swimmers, ages 5-18, took to the water and swam between 100 and 200 laps to participate in the Red Cross Swim for Freedom Event.

All of the swimmers are collecting pledges to benefit the chapter's Armed Forces Emergency Service Department. Their mission supports military personnel, both active duty and retired, and their families. Money raised will stay



Newport Blues swimmers take their laps to benefit the Red Cross Swim for Freedom. Above, Blanca Zelaya, left and her brother, Gabriel. Below, Jackie Peterson.

Photo by Adrienne Downing

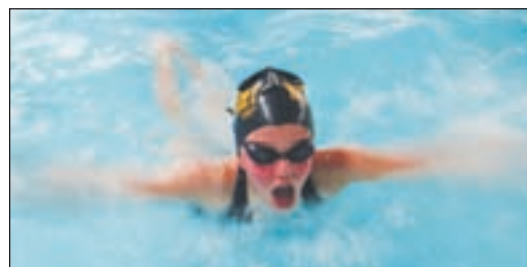
in Rhode Island and be used to support the state's military families and expand Red Cross services.

The event is co-chaired by Senator Jack Reed, Congressman Patrick Kennedy and Sheila

Keenan, AFES Coordinator for the American Red Cross's Rhode Island chapter.

To islander Jackie Peterson, the daughter of an emergency medicine physician and Navy orthopedic surgeon, the swim-a-thon has extra meaning.

"It is a big deal for her because it combines my job, emergency services, with her dad being in the military, so it just makes it that much more important for her," her



mom, Stacy Peterson, said.

Peterson's goal was to swim at least 100 laps and she was able to swim 122.

"I really like to swim on the team because it is fun and it is a great way to meet new people," she said.

If you wish to donate to the Jamestown swimmers, or for more information about joining the team, email Donovan at coach@newportblues.org.

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## St. Mark boys learn a lot during season

St. Mark's fourth and fifth grade CYO basketball team, coached by Chris Varrecchione and Chris Crawford, completed their season this past weekend with a conference game in Bristol. Despite playing older and more experienced kids all year, it was a great learning experience for the team in their first year playing together.



St. Mark boy's fourth and fifth grade basketball team.

The boys saw tremendous improvement as the season went on. Leading the team was Riley "The Bull" Greene, who played both ends of the floor and took it to big-

ger kids. He usually ended with two points to show for his effort.

Grant "The Towering Inferno" Gillis, anchored a monster rebounding effort every game. His efforts often included Kevin "the Glide"

Babich, who scored with his second attempt layups or wide open shots from a Gillis rebound and deft passing.

The back court was beautifully handled by the lightning quick Antonio "love the three" and his brother, Dimitri "Nothing but

Net" Varrecchione who feed off each other's energy. Ben "Flash" Lee and Jared "all day" Ford provided steady, press-breaking ability while dishing off to wide-open teammates for easy shots.

Austin "toughness" Turillo pulled down many boards. Assisting Austin "the Glove" Crawford were John "pickpocket" Waddington and Nick "Crazy D" Dalton under the boards against usually taller opponents.

One referee in East Providence said, "That's a young team that no one is going to want to face in the future. Man have they gotten better over the year for a bunch of kids who never played the game."

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