

Complete List of Publications

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News & Feature Articles

Demo Magazine

<http://cms.colum.edu/demo/>

2008

Election Night Memories

Gazette (Chicago) Formerly The Near West Gazette

2007

Global Warming: we all can do our part to improve environment (City Beat Feature)

This article won an award in the 20th Annual Apex Awards for Excellence competition

Quarry Park Slated to Open Spring 2008 (Front Page Cover Story)

Ald. Balcer, City look to replace Bridgeport Jewel (Front Page Cover Story)

Jewel Closes its Doors (Front Page Cover Story)

Quarry Park Plans Revealed (page 2 story)

McGuane Park to host Summer Fest

St. Mary of Perpetual Help celebrates 125th anniversary

Chicago Memorial Day Parade a grand solemn tradition

McGuane Park women finally get new lockers

Problems at Bridgeport Village slow development's completion

Balcer, CDC look to redevelop old bank property, brownfield.

Bridgeport Battle sees Segvich taking on Balcer

Halsted Street the gateway to 11th Ward revitalization

2006

Park district won't budge on swim coach

Park District ousts star swim coach

Fireman Joseph Kish proves to be a true Bridgeport hero

Community leader Bland takes on Turner in 9th House District

Day of the Dead Celebrates life and lost love ones (City Beat Feature)

Art Revolution underway throughout Pilsen Area (City Beat Feature)

Roosevelt University cuts Tuition in Some Programs

Spirit: A Magazine Designed for the Diverse Woman

www.spirit-mag.com

2006

Spheres Of Influence; Someone You Should Know, Pat Michalski

2007

In the Spirit of Enlightenment; An Interview with Cindy Kelly

An Anchor of Hope; an Interview with Lisa Aprati

Healthy Conflict: Why you should argue with your Partner!

For Her Information Chicago

<http://www.forherinformation.com>

2007

A New Era For Working Moms

Essortment.com Formerly pagewise.com

<http://www.essortment.com/>

2002

Ten ways to destress before a test

Learn about skiing; techniques, equipment and instruction

Hosting a dress-up birthday party

Short Stories

Story Week Reader

http://www.colum.edu/Academics/Fiction_Writing/Publishing_Lab/SWR/2006SWR.php

2006

The End of Summer

10,000 Tons of Black Ink

<http://aprilgalarza.wordpress.com/2008/01/02/1a-llorona/>

2007

La Llorona

Park District ousts star swim coach

By April Galarza

For the seniors at the McGuane Chicago Park District pool, swim coach Victor Dapkus has given them the support they need to go for the gold. Dapkus knows how to relate with all people—but especially senior citizens—and the trust his athletes have in him is so complete that many of his new students jump into the deep end of the pool on their first day.

Much to the dismay of his loyal students, the Chicago Park District recently forced Dapkus to resign because he could not work the 20-hour minimum it now requires of

all swim coaches.

Dapkus has coached part time at McGuane Park Pool for the last five years in addition to his full-time job as a chiropractic physician. His senior swimmers said the number of hours the coach works is not as important as the quality of work the coach does.

According to Adele Kiel, captain of the Senior Swim Team, just six and a half hours of Dapkus's time a week is worth more to them than the full time presence of young lifeguards and coaches. Between the younger coaches to whom the seniors have a harder time relating, and Dapkus, who gently encourages them to succeed, the seniors feel there simply is no comparison.

"The 17-year-old lifeguards don't have the experience to interact with seniors or don't believe we can do what we're doing," Keil said. "Granted they can swim and know CPR, but they just don't add enough warmth and encouragement, as well a pushing us to our limits."

After working with Dapkus over the past five years, many senior swimmers have advanced from novice swimmers to competitive athletes. Some have gone on to compete in state meets, and 13 even qualified for the upcoming National Senior Olympics in Louisville, KY, in 2007. This is not the average "low-impact" senior swim class.

In fact, the McGuane group is the only official senior swim team in Illinois, and if they were to go to the Senior Olympics, they would be representing the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. Without their favorite coach, this goal would be much harder to achieve.

"Our 40 swimmers are quite distressed that the only senior team in the State of Illinois is about to be dissolved," said Kiel



Victor Dapkus was asked to resign as McGuane Park swim coach because his medical practice does not allow him to put in the 20 hours required by the Chicago Park District.

Besides becoming competitive athletes, the swimmers under Dapkus's care lead much more healthful lives than before they joined the team. As a chiropractor, Dapkus originally had started teaching swimming as a sideline to help older patients achieve better health.

"I try to enroll my patients into water aerobics/swimming because it is good for total health," Dapkus said. "It is good for the joints and strengthening muscles. There is less gravity in water, so it is easier to rebuild muscle mass during water aquatic exercise."

The team started five years ago when six volunteers agreed to learn to swim under Dapkus's instruction. He told them their goal would be to compete at the state competition. At the time none of the seniors believed that was possible. Today, team members can do 100 yards of the butterfly stroke, and they have competed in local Chicago meets and all over the state.

From its original six, the team grew to 40 members. Until Nov. 8, they practiced three times a week for an hour, completing an average of 40 links (laps) and up to 72 links, which is about a mile.

Having a team of their own and the chance to work toward goals is a dream come true for the seniors. The oldest person on the team is 80. Most are in their 70s. They come from diverse cultural backgrounds but have one thing in common: they agree about the importance of Dapkus and say the cohesiveness he provides is immeasurable.

"The senior population is the most expanding population," Dapkus explained. "For many of the women when they were young there was no opportunity for them to participate in competitive sports; now, they have an opportunity they never had and never expected to have."

To keep Dapkus as their coach and keep the swim team together, Kiel and her teammates started a petition and sent the signatures they gathered to the Chicago Department of Aging; the Chicago Park District; City Director of Human Resources Joseph Vetrano; City Chief Program and Recreation Officer Randy Ernst; and the Superintendent of the Chicago Park District, Timothy Mitchell. They even spoke to Mitchell in person and were informed that due to new policy all lifeguards and swim coaches must work at least 20 hours weekly, with no exceptions.

Dapkus understands the need to follow policy but wishes the Park District could have made an exception based on how much seniors benefit from his efforts. "Many of my students couldn't move or walk well when they first came into my office, but



Coach Victor Dapkus (rear, fourth from left) and his senior swimmers were all smiles after doing well in Springfield during a September meet, but now Dapkus can only volunteer to help due to Park District rule changes.

now with chiropractic therapy and swimming, they've turned their lives around," Dapkus said.

The seniors hope the Park District can create a new position for Dapkus allowing him to continue achieving the extraordinary results he has produced with the McGuane Park Seniors. For example, if he were hired specifically as the Chicago Swim Team Coach, perhaps different requirements for working hours could apply.

So far, the team has not heard any positive responses to their request. Dapkus officially resigned Nov. 8 and has applied to volunteer at McGuane so he can continue working with the team. Also, the Valentine Boys and Girls club on 34th Street and Emerald Avenue has offered its facility to the seniors if no other solution is found.

According to Kiel, many people, especially those who can make decisions about whether the swim team gets the recognition it deserves, seem skeptical of what the seniors are capable of. Their skepticism, she said, is holding the swim team back. "Can't the City of Chicago help us, or are seniors not that important to Chicago?" Kiel asked.

Please also see "Park District won't budge on swim coach" update in the January Edition of the Gazette.