

President's Convention Report September 2003

I would like to take this opportunity to extend a special thank you to the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee members for their time and dedication to synchronized swimming. Their advice, leadership and policy decisions are always in the best interest of our athletes, volunteers and sport. It constantly amazes me the soul searching and thought process that goes into every one of their decisions. It has also been a privilege to work with our Executive Director, Terry Harper and his hardworking staff. They continue to exemplify their dedication to our programs, volunteers and sport by achieving all of the goals and priorities placed in front of them. Thank you staff for doing so through the most trying of times with a smile always on your face. I would also like to thank you, the dedicated volunteers, for allowing me the honor and privilege to serve as your President. And without the support and love of my family and friends, I would not be able to continue to dedicate my life to this wonderful sport. I look forward to my last year as your President and the exciting Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

Today, I come to you to ask you for your help. In January 2001, the Board of Directors approved an organizational goal to "Increase Participation" within synchronized swimming. At that meeting, we established our quadrennium goals for 2001-2004 as follows:

- GOAL 1: Strive for Excellence in the National Team Program**
- GOAL 2: Financial Diversification and Development**
- GOAL 3: Develop and Implement Programs to Increase Participation and Quality Performance for Judges, Athletes & Coaches (JAC)**

Since then, 5 groups consisting of volunteers, national office staff and athletes have met twice a year to develop plans to reach these goals. In January of this year, the groups met in Las Vegas, Nevada to review their plans and establish priorities for the next 6 months. In June, the groups met again in Indianapolis, Indiana to update their plans and to establish priorities for June – January 2004. Over the years, this list of priorities has grown from 3 items per group to sometimes as many as 5 items per group. The list of priorities was mailed to the membership in the convention packet.

These priorities always provide focus and direction for the national office staff and volunteers throughout the year as we take the necessary steps toward accomplishing our goals. Our priorities and goals so far have been focused on improving our programs and increasing participation within those programs. But, there is another part of our "Increase Participation" organizational goal and that is to "Increase membership". So, not only do we want our current members to become more involved by advancing in the judge's levels or participating in more education programs to increase their knowledge, but we also want to increase participation by getting new members involved in our sport.

And that is where we need your help!!

Only the volunteers and clubs truly have the means to recruit new members. Last month, on one of our Executive Committee conference calls when we were discussing the issue of growing our membership, our Marketing Vice President, Ted Roche, said it so eloquently “increasing membership numbers falls back to the volunteers”.

With the marketing seminars offered at US Age Groups and convention, along with the seminar offered this year on how to recruit athletes, the organization has begun to provide the clubs, coaches and club administrators with the ideas and tools to expand their club awareness within their community and thus, their membership. Of course, when your clubs increase in numbers, our sport as a whole grows.

The Olympic Year, and the year after the Olympics, provides the perfect time and opportunity for our membership base to grow. With the excitement and visibility from a Summer Olympic Games, increasing your club membership base is an opportunity waiting to happen. As all of you are aware, Synchronized Swimming is a beautiful, creative, and athletic sport and once you are involved, you are hooked!!

Back in January 2001, the Board of Directors set a goal of 10% growth of membership per year!! Since then, we have realized without a detailed plan and without your assistance, this goal is extremely unrealistic. So, this year, our goal is a 2% increase. I would like to encourage all of you to help us reach that goal. As of the July 7th membership report, our membership numbers were at 5250 with 217 clubs. So, according to my math, a 2% increase in members would only be 105 more members! I believe that is a very achievable goal. If only ½ of our current clubs got one new member, we would exceed our goal.

So, I would like to challenge all of you to help us exceed this goal. Let's work together as a TEAM and focus on increasing our membership numbers this year, so your club and our national organization can not only become more financially stable, but more people can experience the benefits of Synchronized Swimming.