

CAREFREE CLUB BOARD MEETING MINUTES

JULY 14, 2021

7:00PM

Carefree Clubhouse

Attendance: See attached Sign in Sheet

Minutes

SPECIAL MEETING

Presenter: Ashley O'Neal

Details:

- The special meeting was called by Ashley O'Neal, Vice President of the Carefree Club.
- The meeting was called due recent incidents brought to the Board's attention during the Monday, July 12th monthly board meeting.
- An investigation team was assembled to interview the current guards and the information from that is provided below.
- The investigation team consisted of Ashley O'Neal, Adam Terrell (board member) and Gary Kubancsek (board member).
- Ashley commented that all the investigative information was shared ahead of time and to respect the board members time, we would make this meeting no longer than 45 minutes total. This meeting is not open for Q&A and/or discussion.

RESEARCH

Ashley O'Neal

Details:

- I spent several hours researching the Visual Awareness Test (VAT) and its common practice. Researched showed that the VAT is a common drill used amongst the lifeguard community. In my opinion, I found [Diary of a Lifeguard](#) Blogspot the most informative resource as it explained, in detail how the test is conducted. I did notice that this website calls it the "Vigilance Awareness Test" vs. the "Visual Awareness Test".
- In addition to my research online, I called several aquatics centers in central and southern Indiana to see how they train their guards and if they used the same training methods (VAT & bucketing) in their facilities. One aquatics center emailed me and that information is posted below.

Southern Indiana Aquatics Center: (location was asked not to be shared).

"For our visual awareness test, we use a doll, Timmy, that is filled up with water and weighs about 15-20 pounds. In this test we go to a lifeguard and secretly, without them noticing place the doll in their zone or area of scanning. They have 30 seconds to see the doll, react to the doll, and save the doll. This is 30 seconds because it gives the guard 10 seconds to see the doll, 20 seconds to act and save the doll. This is the lifeguard standard for most places. In a circumstance where a guard fails this test, depending on how new the guard is and how long into the season we are, we do one of two routes.

- 1. If a new guard fails in the beginning of the season, we explain what a Timmy is and how they should have handled the save. Guards are all aware of this test but often need to fail to improve. Guards normally do not fail twice.*
- 2. If this is an experienced guard, we have them become a "rove" which is a person who goes to all guards and checks to see if they need water, sunscreen, or anything else. They also are responsible for caring their tube everywhere they go in case of a guard saving a child and the rove needing to watch their water at their chair. They will stay rove until we test and evaluate the guard and feel comfortable in their guarding.*

To prevent drownings and unsafe behavior in the pool we have an "in service" every Saturday and guards are responsible to come to 2 every month. This is where we practice saves, "timmys", and backboard training. It is also important to realize that some guards are so focused on kids around them in their area that they forget to scan. For instance, a guard in the diving well area is so focused on the kids jumping off the board that they forget to scan beside them. One last point, a child drowning is normally a gradual thing. They get tired and guard can notice a kid struggling. Although there are instances where a kid jumps in and cannot swim or goes to a deep area and can't swim, most of the time it is not instant. With guards communicating concerns to other guards, this keeps guards aware of children that potentially could drown.

Thank you so much for reaching out and willing to learn different styles of guarding!

Central Indiana Aquatics Facility:

Discussion via phone conversation found that the “red ball” method was outdated and used years ago. This facility manager has experience with the red ball method and didn’t seem to find it was effective in a large aquatic’s facility. They use a baby doll for their VAT. They have heard of “bucketing” (when you stare at a red ball in a bucket for the duration of your rotation) but has only seen or heard of it as being a “joke” and an “old school warning”, never followed through kind of way. This facility uses similar methods as the Southern Indiana Center for correcting guards when VAT is failed. (i.e., corrective explanation, errand runner, termination).

RESEARCH

Gary Kubanscek

Westside, Indianapolis Aquatics Center

Gary had a phone conversation with an Aquatics Center on the westside of Indianapolis. His findings included:

- They see a failed VAT as an opportunity to retrain and re-teach the guards and reinforce with positive scanning of the area as a chance to relearn that skill set.
- That guarding the bucket is very “old school” negative reinforcement/punishment that was popular years ago. No progressive modern management theory would embrace that ideology. Better to use a failed VAT as a positive opportunity to teach and train.

GUARD INTERVIEWS

Investigation Team

Lifeguard Interviews:

As mentioned above, Ashley, Adam & Gary held interviews with the current lifeguards of the Carefree pool. That information was shared with the Board prior to the special meeting and is copied below.

Email sent to the board on July 13, 2021 @ 11:27PM:

The “investigation team” interviewed nine (9) of the guards in person tonight (07/13/21) at the Carefree Pool at closing time. I, (Ashley) will be interviewing one more tomorrow afternoon before the special board meeting. During the interview process, Adam, Gary and I split up and each interviewed 2-4 people, separately (depending on who was done first).

I’ve highlighted the questions and feedback from the guards below:

- 1. How long have you worked as a lifeguard for the Carefree Pool?**
 - a. (1) less than a month, (2) approx. a month, (1) two years, (1) no answer, (1) three years, (2) four years & (1) five years.
- 2. Have you been “bucketed” this season?**
 - a. Two out of the nine guards were made to watch the mop bucket of water with the red ball in it.
 - b. One of the guards has not been bucketed due to the fact that she is the one doing the red ball exercise and has never had an opportunity to be red balled herself.
- 3. If so, can you describe your experience?**
 - a. One guard said it was “suitable – not humiliated.”
 - b. One described it as a short 10 mins that he/she understood the reasoning behind it.
- 4. How do you feel about the “red ball” exercise?**
 - a. Overall, every guard was in favor of the “red ball” exercise.
 - b. Three of the nine guards want the bucket discipline of failing the red ball exercise changed.
 - c. They ALL understand there needs to be consequences for failing the red ball exercise.
 - d. Knowing it might occur makes you more aware.
 - e. Nervous to be red balled – doesn’t want to fail.

- f. Most effective Visual Awareness Test – if you don't recognize it, you're not doing your job.
- 5. Can you tell us about Heather in general and her management style?**
- a. Heather makes sure the guards are doing their job.
 - b. Heather is GREAT
 - c. LOVE HER
 - d. Good – Nice but strict
 - e. Holds people accountable
 - f. Amazing manager, last year there was no direction, never knew to “scan” the area before. Didn't know it was a requirement
 - g. Heather makes sure guards know what they are doing.
 - h. Encouraging and understanding with being a first-time guard.
- 6. Do you or have you ever threatened by Max or Heather?**
- a. (8) guards said they have never felt threatened by Max or Heather
 - b. (1) mentioned that they don't feel threatened, just uncomfortable with how aggressive Max is.
- 7. Is there anything you'd like to share with the Board of Directors?**
- a. Teach – run better.
 - b. At first, this guard didn't care for Max or Heather. Change was difficult. But as they worked together more, this guard loves working for them.
 - c. If you cant watch the bucket, you cant watch the pool
 - d. Three buckets would make more sense as you “scanning” the pool not staring. Three buckets would make you “scan”
 - e. Carefree Pool overall is a good place to work
 - f. Management has been the best its ever been
 - g. The guards don't consider Max & Heather to be bad people, they are aware and can identify Heather's experience and they feel comfortable in their role.
 - h. Some of the guards are confused why people are so upset over bucketing. Some find it beneficial and helps improve skill.
 - i. One guard notices that Max and Heather push and rely on Sara a lot.
 - j. One also requested better umbrellas for the chairs. 😊

In addition to the guard interviews, I spent a large part of my day doing research on the red ball/VAT (Visual Awareness Test), and starting to compile a handbook for seasonal lifeguards.

During my time today, I spoke with a several aquatics facilities in central Indiana to see how they operate with this kind of test. I gave all these locations my word on discretion. My findings include:

1. All of them are aware of the “red ball” exercise
2. All agreed it was outdated
3. “timmy” dolls are more commonly used. These “timmy” dolls can float or sink. They are the size and weight of a small child and cost a few hundred dollars apiece.
4. Repercussions for failing the test varied. Early in the season there are warnings, logs and more training. If ever a head guard or supervisor felt uncomfortable having someone guard, they were put on other tasks at the pool. Some were even “floaters or errand people” these type of people bring water and sunscreen to guards. Then, more training was required until they were ready for chair. Later in the season, when guards failed the VAT they are terminated.

GUARD STATEMENTS

Guard's live statements the Board:

In addition to all the research above, the Board gave the lifeguards an opportunity (15 minutes) to address the board (without Max present) during the special meeting (as requested by the guards themselves). Notes from those statements are listed:

- Sara Burns, headguard started the statements explaining their version of the “red ball” & “bucketing” methods. She explained that she is typically the one doing the red ball, as she is the head guard. Sara mentioned that there has never been a time where an explanation for being “redballed” wasn’t given to a guard. Every guard has always received corrective feedback.
- Noah explains the scanning drills and the video that Max and Heather had them watch at the beginning of the season (before opening day). He explained the importance of scanning your area and the impact the camp video had on the guards. He commented that Max is “*Stern and Strict*” but that he brought a lot of structure to the pool. Noah has been red-balled twice and bucketed once. He passed the second red ball test which didn’t required being bucketed.
- Justin explains that Max has created a structured environment and that in the past lots of guards’ questions would go unanswered. He explained that even during being bucketed, you are getting paid. Justin felt that sitting at a table guarding a bucket while being paid was a “*pretty good deal*”. They know the red ball & bucketing works. But they are okay and open to changes. He expressed the guards love of the job and their love for Max and Heather. He Justin went on to explain Max’s compassion for the guards and how Max will go out of his way to grill them hot dogs when they are hungry or order them pizza. He let the board know that one of Max’s main concerns when opening the pool was the lack of water in the guard shack for them. He said that Max now makes sure that water is provided for the guards and has tried to make their working atmosphere better by working to keep them cool during the hot summer days. While his attempts to bring them A/C in the guard shack have failed. He still makes sure they are provided cold drinking water. Justin expressed his gratitude for the guards safety by telling them how a guard was waiting for their ride home for almost an hour after closing and Max refused to leave them until he knew they were safely on their way home.
- Lifeguards commented that it blows their minds that Max would want to do this job as Pool Chair without getting paid.
- Sara made a closing statement about the commitment of both Max and Heather and the appreciation the guards have for them. She explained that they had one (1) in-service for the entire season last year, this season, so far, they’ve had three (3).

SPECIAL MEETING

Presenter: Ashley O’Neal

Comments:

- Before voting began Max arrived after the guards left. Robert asked additional questions regarding the red ball and bucketing and Max explained in detail how they perform these drills in addition to the corrective measures they already take. (ie., three strikes you are out, communication on why they were red balled and/or bucketed, etc)
- Ashley made comments to the board that if the Board decided to remove Max as the Pool Chair and Ashley was to take over the role, that she couldn’t do it alone along with her other obligations on the board and would expect the support and help from the board as a whole to finish the remainder of the season.
- Robert started to ask more questions but was reminded that all the information was sent to the Board ahead of time and was given the opportunity to hear the board and to make the best decision they felt was right. We have already been patient with some of the questions and that the meeting was at 45 minutes and we are ready to vote and go home for the evening.

ROLL CALL VOTING

Presenter: **Ashley O'Neal**

ISSUE #1 Remove Max Scholz as Pool Chair

(11) No, (1) Y, (1) Abstain

Max will remain Pool Chair.

ISSUE #2 Remove “bucketing” as an option for corrective behavior when failing the VAT/red ball exercise. Alternative methods should be used moving forward. (i.e. certification retraining methods as used by the Red Cross for Lifeguard certification purposes.)

(3) No, (8) Y, (2) Abstain

Bucketing option will no longer be used for corrective behavior when failing the VAT/red ball exercise.

7/14/21 Special Meeting

Ashley O'Neal

Christy Wise

Robert O'Connell

Steve Windsor

Nathaniel Tempest

~~Sam~~

ADAM TERRELL

Jacqueline Cline

Erich Bauer

Mike Martin (Zoom)

Tracy K (Zoom)

Sydney Hohenstein (guard)

Sarah Burns (head guard)

Justin Lewis (head guard)

Noah June (guard)

Sydney Goodin (guard)

Lindsay Goodin (guard)

Sam Peebles (guard)

Imogen Horne (head guard)

Jeff Williams (Zoom)

Max Scholz (arrived after guards left)