



Mostly ABOUT FUN

Young swimmers get to relax during **Carefree Crocodiles** summer swimming program

STORIES BY MIKE BEAS • PHOTOS BY MIKE WOLANIN

In and out of pool, coaches put emphasis on friendship

A tradition 41 years in the making resumes at the Carefree Club Pool in Greenwood for eight weeks each summer.

Since 1974, the Carefree Crocodiles Swim Team has been a recreational program offered to children ages 5 to 17 from Greenwood and surrounding communities.

This Crocodiles' season began with a June 4 practice and is well under way. The team already has competed in five of its eight scheduled meets.

The season concludes July 18

with the annual Community Swim Conference Meet against teams representing five local subdivisions: Meridian Woods, Chapel Glen, Devon Country Club and Westchester.

Although the Crocodiles compete against other teams, the 140 area swimmers in the program aren't focused solely on lowering times and gathering ribbons.

To be a Crocodile means pursuit of enhanced swim technique but also the opportunity to befriend new teammates and/or reconnect with ones from previous summer seasons.

"Carefree is not just the swimming aspect of it but also the socializing part because this is our summer league. This is our fun time," said head swim coach Samantha Dikeman, whose staff of instructors includes Marcie Colwell (9- and 10-year-olds), Holly Toth (8-under) and technique coach Tom Stennock.

"I call it socializing with a splash of swimming because for a lot of them who swim competitively this is their break to where they can have fun with it," Dikeman said. "This is a good part of pulling the kids back together to

meet where they might not have been able to all year."

Those who take part are expected to train for one hour four mornings a week at the 25-yard pool and diving well.

Swimmers should already be able to swim comfortably in deep water.

There are two choices of practice times — 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. and 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. — with older, more-established Crocodiles swimmers often seen assisting younger teammates with everything from starts to turns to proper stroke technique.

This, like almost everything else regarding the Carefree Crocodiles, is a tradition. Names, faces and swim skill levels cycle in and out, but the foundation, even four-plus decades, later remains largely unchanged.

"Our coaches have been around for a long time and are really good with dealing with small children. If the kids are having trouble, they let them sit out. It's one thing if a parent says something to their kid, but if they see someone their age and their friends, those are really

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Teen following tradition of passing down knowledge

Adam Morrow is among the oldest swimmers practicing four mornings a week at the Carefree Club pool in Greenwood.

With that comes a certain responsibility.

About to enter his sophomore year at Center Grove High School, Morrow, 15, and other Carefree Crocodiles in or near his age group are counted on to

help the younger swimmers with their technique.

Morrow as a longtime Croc — he started at age 7 — understands the drill, as it wasn't all that long ago he was on the receiving end of the helpful instruction.

"Every Friday we get in groups with the little kids and help them with their strokes. Sometimes it's kind of hard to

explain what to do because I just kind of know what to do," said Morrow, who competed in freestyle and breaststroke events for the Trojans last winter.

"I do like that a lot of my friends are in it, too. And I've known the coaches for a long time."

The typical Carefree Crocodiles

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Top: From right, Maddi Higginson, Ava Rolfsen and Ava Beecher listen to swim coach Marcie Colwell on Friday during swimming practice for the Carefree Crocodiles swim team in the Carefree subdivision in Greenwood. Right: Adam Morrow, 15, of Greenwood is a senior member of the Carefree Crocodiles. He has been a member of the team for seven years.



Swimming coach Marcie Colwell instructs Henry Howe, center, as he dives off the starting block Friday during swimming practice for the Carefree Crocodiles Swim Team in Greenwood. MIKE VOLAHIN / FOR THE DAILY JOURNAL.

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season starts in early June and concludes the third or fourth weekend of July with an all-day Community Swim Conference Meet.

This season's finale is scheduled for July 18 at Franklin Community High School.

Morrow will be there along with his Crocodile teammates, many of whom he's helped progress with their confidence and swim technique at one point or another.

"It's the passing of the torch. Adam has been around a long time, and one of the things I like about him is you don't have to get on him about helping," said Erich Bauer, president of the Carefree Crocodiles.

"Adam is quiet and kind of laid-back, but he's a worker when it comes to swimming."

The assistance of Morrow and his fellow Crocodiles in the oldest age group (15 to 17) is a vital component of why the program continues to enjoy immense success in what is its 41st consecutive summer.

The more crowded the Carefree Pool becomes during a morning practice session, the more appreciated the older swimmers' input and willingness to assist becomes.

"They were once Little Splashers going across the diving well themselves. They were helped by the older swimmers," Bauer said.

"And if you can imagine 140 kids, if they're here altogether it can be mass chaos sometimes. (Coaches) need the older kids to help with the younger kids."

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big convincers for them," said Erich Bauer, who is now in his third year as Crocodiles president.

"You have to have some capacity to swim in some ways," Bauer said. "But kids will start out and they'll almost virtually be swimming in the bottom of the pool, and by the end of the season parents are just amazed their kids are making it 25 yards across."

The Carefree Crocodiles are funded by the Carefree Homeowners Association but over the years have attracted swimmers from all the Johnson County school districts, as well as Roncalli.

This season there are three

"We do hardly any advertising. Most of it is word of mouth. This is about fun, and then we throw competition in there, as well."

Erich Bauer,
president of Carefree Crocodiles

families who home-school their children taking part.

"We've had great coaching here. We've got four of the best coaches in the city, and it's outside, so it's a great summer program for kids to come where they can have a workout before 10 o'clock in the morning," Bauer said. "We do hardly any advertising. Most of it is word of mouth. This is about fun, and then we throw competition in there, as well."

Aside from the competitions, doughnut Fridays are one of the more popular traditions woven into being a Crocodile swimmer. A dozen boxes of doughnuts are set out on nearby picnic tables at roughly 8:30 every Friday morning.

Then it's every Crocodile for himself.

"I think the biggest lesson is you can go out and try something new. And you're going to make friends, you're going to have a good time, and you're going to learn how to swim," Dikeman said. "It introduces the kids to a lot of different kids they wouldn't have typically met. This is a good confidence booster for a lot of kids."

"They give out ribbons for every meet, so this is kind of where they get that excitement for swimming, and then they can move it to another aspect."

IN THE SWIM

WHO: Carefree Crocodiles Swim Team

FOUNDED: 1974

WHAT: Recreational swim team offered to children ages 5 through 17 in Greenwood and surrounding communities

WHERE: Carefree Club Pool, 1201 Leisure Lane, Greenwood

COMPETITION: Dual meets

COST (2015 SEASON): Carefree residents: \$105 (one swimmer), \$200 (two), \$285 (three), \$345 (four); non-Carefree residents: \$115 (one), \$220 (two), \$315 (three), \$385 (four)

WEBSITE: carefreecrocodiles.org