



Emily Schindler Winterfest Scholarship

Emily Schindler spent most of her life in the water. Joining the Severna Park YMCA (SPY) when she was 9 years old, she always put friendship above the competition of the sport. On a snow-covered road in Garrett County Maryland in January 2004, Emily was killed in a car accident. Emily was a freshman at Frostburg State University at the time of her death.

Winterfest has special significance to Emily's family. At the inaugural Winterfest Meet in 2003 Emily gave the devotional that she had written at the start of finals. Three weeks before Emily's accident she attended Winterfest 2004. She was there as a volunteer timer and to cheer on her brother and her former teammates. Her 2003 devotional was read at her funeral. She wrote about her coaches seeing something in her that her times didn't show, how swimming had been her greatest adventure and that real success only comes in finding a place in heaven.

The Schindler family is honoring Emily's memory with a scholarship to a participant from a visiting team at Winterfest. This year's recipient of the \$500 Winterfest Scholarship is Thomas Rhoads from the Ridley Rays Swim Team. Thomas has been swimming for 11 years. He has qualified for District, State and National meets. In June he will graduate from Academy Park High School where he is a Presidential Honor Award recipient and a member of the National Honor Society. He will graduate in the top 10% of his class. He plans to attend West Chester University in the fall where he will major in Criminal Justice.

Excerpts from Thomas' essay:

Many things shape and affect our lives and for me swimming has had the biggest impact. My parents have provided me with the opportunities to compete in many different sporting events so that I could get a feel for team concepts. I tried out many, but swimming was the sport that I was most attracted to. Swimming has been the sport that I have obtained the most out of.

...swimming has taught me is leadership. My coach always expected me to not only be a successful swimmer, but to also be a successful leader. Many of the younger swimmers naturally look up to the older guys as role models. I have been taught to always present myself as a good sportsman and to teach the younger swimmers to do the same. Making it fun for all swimmers, not just the elite, and cheering for someone who may be coming in last but giving their best effort is an example of being a good sport.

...swimming has taught me ... that practice is the key to success. I have become a fairly successful athlete due in great part to hard work and dedication. Setting time based goals helped me focus my efforts during practice. Without attending practice day after day, I would have never been able to obtain the success I have had. Kids sometimes wonder how I have been able to achieve the things I have, and I always simply reply practice! Practice can only make you better if you put in the quality time and effort.

I am sure there are many swimmers deserving of this scholarship, as I have met many of them throughout the years in this sport. I would hope that many of the people that I have met would feel the same way about me. I have dedicated the last 11 years of my life to swimming and I have received so much and hope I have given some back.

