

Swimming For A Cause

By: Tom Caccia, NISCA Journal Editor

I hesitate to write articles for the Journal, usually because I'm not sure I have much to say or if people who read the Journal would be interested in what I have to say anyway. But, this time around, you just might be interested in this article. We're all faced with perception every day. Kids want to be perceived in a particular way amongst their peers and so do we. Usually, we can do something about perception, if we choose to. Here is one way we chose to change the perception of our team.

At the end of our last girls season, it seemed as though every day going into the last few weeks of the season we had a new set of circumstances to deal with on our girls team. Grades, violations, drama within the members of the team, and so on. My assistant coach and I were at a loss as to what to do about it to change things, but we knew something had to be done. We agreed to spend time during the upcoming summer to discuss possibilities on change.

The season ended and we moved on to the boys season. On one late night bus trip the guys and I were talking and they asked me, "Coach, what are three things you would never do?" Thinking for a minute, I didn't know quite how to answer them but I came up with, "Well, I'd never cheat on my wife, I'd never get drunk, and I'd never wear pink." Each guy in turn then said three things they would never do ranging from skydiving to stealing. I didn't think much of it again until our awards reception for the boys. At that the end of that reception, the guys had meticulously prepared and gift wrapped a "thank you" gift for me. I opened the box only to find a really nice Polo Coach Shirt embroidered with "Hillmen Swimming – Coach Caccia" I was really appreciative, except that it was a lovely shade of PINK! I tried to appear appreciative, anyway.

When I went home that night, my wife and I were welcomed by my daughter and her husband, a high school wrestling coach, who had come to town for dinner. My daughter asked me how

things went and how was the reception and so on. I should stop and say that my daughter, Ashley, is a Pediatric Oncology and Critical Care nurse at the University of Iowa Children's hospitals and clinics in Iowa City. She is also studying and will complete her Nurse Practitioner's degree, specializing in Oncology in May. Well, getting back to the story, I showed her the shirt and asked, "What am I going to do with this?" She replied, "Why don't you have a Cancer Awareness Meet?" From that, an idea was born. What was meant to be a joke would turn out to be one of the best things to ever happen for our team in my 30 years of coaching.

The first thing to do was pick a meet at which we would be doing this and the obvious choice was our Girls Invitational held the last weekend of October. October being Breast Cancer Awareness month, it would prove to be the place for the most people to participate. We decided that what fund raising we usually do at this meet with such things as t-shirt sales would be dedicated to our "cause." We started thinking about getting some national level people involved by signing shirts,



Coach Liz Peters (left), Assistant Coach and Head Fund Raiser for Platteville/Lancaster Girls Team and Ashley Cleary, Pediatric Oncology and Critical Care Nurse at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, Iowa City, Iowa. Both alumni and former team mates of the Hillmen Swimming Program.