

# Glenview swim club holds relay for pediatric cancer research: 'We are honoring his spirit'



Coach Judy Nolan prepares her swimmer in the Glenview Titan Aquatic Club's 'Hour of Power' fundraiser at Glenbrook South High School Saturday Dec. 9, 2017. (Kevin Tanaka / Pioneer Press)

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**T**he swimmers gathered around diving blocks, dancing and singing along to pop songs before taking turns jumping into the pool and swimming as fast as they could.

For an hour straight, about 140 Glenview Titan Aquatic Club swimmers, ages 6 to 18 years old, came together to swim relay races. The participants swam the length of the pool, got out and waited in line to swim again. In the last 30 seconds, all the swimmers jumped into the Glenbrook South High School pool to finish the race together.

The swimmers were participating in Hour of Power Relay, an event that swim teams all over the country hold to raise funds and awareness for sarcoma research, said Rick Peterson, co-head coach of the club swim team. The

Glenview Titan Aquatic Club has held Hour of Power swims for the last 5 years. Last year, the team raised more than \$4,000, said Glenview Park District spokeswoman Michele Fiore.

“This may be the highest energy Hour of Power we’ve seen,” said Rick Mullin.

Mullin’s oldest son, Ted Mullin, died in September 2006 after battling sarcoma, said Mary Henry, his mother. Ted Mullin was first diagnosed with cancer in May 2004 during his sophomore year at Carleton College in Minnesota, where he was captain of the swim team, she said.

The cancer went into remission, but by April 2005 it had spread to his lungs, Henry said. After multiple surgeries and treatments, Mullin passed away at home in September 2006, she said.

Two months later the Carleton College swim team held the first Hour of Power event, Henry said. The team decided to create an event based on the relay-style practice that Mullin enjoyed the most, she said.

In the first year, 15 teams across the country held similar events and raised about \$10,000, she said. According to the Carleton College website, about 140 to 180 teams across the country participate annually.

“I think (Ted) would be very proud of this effort. He’d be very supportive of trying to help fund research,” Mullin said. “But I think he’d also be embarrassed that he was sort of the center of a attention of all of this.”

The family started the Ted Mullin Fund for Pediatric Sarcoma Research at the University of Chicago Medicine

Comer Children’s Hospital, and the money raised from the Hour of Power events are donated to the fund, Henry said. As of last year, the Ted Mullin Fund has raised \$1 million with most of the money coming from the Hour of Power events.

The fund also supports Ted Mullin Scholars, which supports college students assisting with pediatric cancer research at the University of Chicago during the summer, Henry said.

“What we’re trying to do is encourage bright, young minds to get into biomedical research,” Henry said.

Teams that participate can raise money in a number of different ways: bake sales, auctions, raffles or selling swim gear at the event, Henry said. Teams have also held Hour of Power events to raise awareness and funds for other cancers that teammates may be battling, she said.

But besides raising money, the event is also meant to raise awareness, she said.

“Sarcomas are a very rare cancer,” Henry said. “It’s really hard to study because you don’t get big cohorts of patients to test treatments on.”

Mullin, a graduate of New Trier High School, started swimming with the Old Willow Swim Club when he was 11 years old. He worked hard with the coaches to master a flip turn so that he could compete, Henry said. Rick Peterson, co-head coach of the Glenview Titan Aquatic Club, said he taught Mullin how to swim when he joined the Old Willow Swim Club and the pair coached together.

Though not the most naturally talented swimmer, Mullin worked hard and was extremely focused, Peterson said. In college, Mullin was a distance swimmer and would compete in the 500 yard or mile swim, Henry said.

Peterson said he has held Hour of Power swims with other teams he has coached since Mullin died. The biggest lesson swimmers learn in participating in the Hour of Power is that “there is something bigger than themselves” and to help others, he said.

“The Hour of Power honors (Mullin’s) two major attributes which are trying as hard as he possibly can every time at practice and then also the team aspect. He was heavily into team,” Peterson said. “It really gets to the essence of who he was. We are honoring his spirit.”