

## National Office

One year ago, only 60 days into my role as your executive director, I presented an action plan for the national operation of U.S. Masters Swimming. I attempted to gather as much information as possible in writing our action plan.

Today, I am able to submit to you an update to our action plan. This update comes with the benefit of time and valuable information I have learned after having met with and listened to a wider audience of our membership, having participated in a number of task forces and committee meetings, having polled our members with satisfaction and expectation surveys, having attended all of our marquee pool national championships, several regional championships and several of our open water events, having communicated with all of our sponsors, and having sought input from our terrific staff.

As a brief recap, the highlights of our 2009 action plan called for the following:

- a) Centralization – establish a headquarters where we could consolidate national priorities for the organization, develop the necessary infrastructure to allow for efficiency, increase productivity, foster staff communication, identify opportunities and create accountability.
- b) People – continue our transition at the national level from a nearly all volunteer-operated organization to a professionally managed organization.
- c) IT – continue to see progress in our IT investments that would benefit our membership and the image of U.S. Masters Swimming.
- d) Marketing and promotion – rebrand the image of U.S. Masters Swimming and begin to better promote our image through internal resources as well as external partnerships.

I'm pleased to share that we made progress in all four areas with these milestones:

### Centralization

- After a six-month national search, the Board of Directors selected Sarasota as our headquarters.
- In May we entered into a long-term lease agreement with the City of Sarasota for the 2,000-square-foot historic Pagoda building to serve as our national headquarters. Our rent is \$1,066 a month with an annual 3 percent escalator.
- In June we renovated the building, adding new flooring, a conference room, semiprivate cubicles and a phone system. We continue to make improvements.
- In July we opened our doors.
- Our headquarters can permanently house 10 employees with an option to add seating for up to two more employees as we grow.

### People

- The controller position was elevated to full-time status with additional human resources responsibilities. Nick Florio was hired as our controller.
- The editor position was elevated to full-time editor-in-chief status with content management responsibility for *SWIMMER* magazine, usms.org and our new e-newsletters. Laura Hamel was hired as our editor-in-chief.
- A director of business operations position was created with responsibility for membership services, club and coach services and our expanding event initiatives. Mark Gill was hired as our director of business operations.
- An account executive position was created to serve our national sponsors as well as grow our sponsor partnerships. Kyle Deery was hired as our account executive.
- An LMSC manager/membership coordinator position was created to serve as a resource to our LMSCs; additional administrative functions will now be performed in the headquarters.

- Tracy Grilli has moved full-time into membership services as well as being the support person for our convention and national events.
- Jim Matysek, our IT director and webmaster, is in the process of relocating from Kansas City to Sarasota full-time.
- Mel Goldstein continues to lead our club development initiatives.
- I relocated from Charlotte to Sarasota in June.

## IT

- MYUSMS.org is now a member exclusive-content area. In MYUSMS.org, members will find our coached workouts and have the opportunity to posts photos and blogs.
- Our fastest growing program is Go the Distance. With more than 1,000 members participating, GTD was managed all by e-mail and using Excel. With our new USMS fitness logs, GTD is now automated.
- We continue to add enhancements and functionality to online membership registration. In 2009, 70 percent of our membership registered online.
- Our 5K, 10K, 3,000 yard and 6,000 yard Postal Championships were offered online for the first time, serving as a positive test for the administration of future postal events to move online.
- Usms.org is undergoing a strategic redesign.

## Marketing and Promotion

- We introduced a new USMS logo and accompanying style guide.
- We introduced a monthly member e-newsletter and monthly coaches e-newsletter. Both have been very popular, with open rates near 50 percent.
- We introduced new marketing resources available for free to any LMSC or USMS club, including:
  - USMS brochures
  - USMS bag tags
  - USMS stickers
  - USMS “Adult Swimming Offered Here” facility stickers
  - USMS swim caps
- This fall and through the winter we will launch an online USMS brand awareness campaign designed to promote the mission of USMS during our peak membership registration period.
- Our brand and Masters stories have been featured in such publications as the *L.A. Times*, *Washington Post*, *St. Petersburg Times*, *Indianapolis Star*, *Men’s Health* and *Sports Business Journal*.

In 2010, we will continue to build on these four pillars while taking additional action with the initiatives outlined below. All initiatives support our purpose, “*to promote health, wellness, fitness and competition through aquatics.*”

## Club Development

- In 2009, USMS staff visited more than 10 states. Our goal was to meet with coaches, promote the value of USMS, encourage membership and incubate new USMS programs. We visited Florida, California, South Carolina, Arizona, Missouri, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Illinois, Indiana, Idaho, Massachusetts and Oregon. In part because of our club development efforts, USMS has added 46 new registered clubs in 2009 for a total of 626, or an 8 percent growth rate from 2008.
- With the help of The Woodlands Masters Swim Team, we hosted our first ever Masters coaches experiential weekend. More than 35 Masters coaches attended the inaugural SwimFest, sharing best practices from the dry side of coaching as well as learning from each other in both the pool and open water environments. We are already planning for SwimFest 2010.
- We will be developing an option in online membership registration that will allow clubs to self register themselves. This information will then auto-populate Places to Swim.

## Events

- USMS will serve as the host for the 2010 Long Course Nationals and 1-Mile Open Water Championships in Puerto Rico. Mark Gill will serve as our event director, with all of the USMS staff providing support. Our goal is to create a truly rewarding experience for our members, sponsors and the swimming community.



- Our open water task force has recommended the creation of the No Boundaries U.S. Masters Swimming open water tour. The idea for No Boundaries is to use the national reach of U.S. Masters Swimming to provide national exposure, promotion and event enhancement for key open water events that are part of the tour. We have included some seed capital in the 2010 budget to secure clinicians and for branding at the venues. We are currently in a trademark search and creative design of the No Boundaries series.
- The 2010 YMCA Masters Nationals will become a U.S. Masters Swimming sanctioned event.

### **Membership Enhancement**

- We are reviewing our insurance offerings to members to see what new benefits we can add that would increase the value of membership.
- We are supportive and are encouraging LMSC sanctioning of even more events. Our LMSC manager/membership coordinator will be a resource to LMSCs in this initiative.
- *SWIMMER* magazine is getting a shot of energy with new features, more letters from members, more authentic photos and product reviews.
- Beginning in 2011, the national office staff has been charged with operation and promotion of our Postals. We will be crafting and implementing a strategy that allows for additional participation from both fitness and competitive swimmers.

### **Marketing and Promotion**

- The January/February issue of *SWIMMER* magazine will include a pull-out, high-energy event promotion poster.
- Additional marketing tools will be made available to LMSCs and clubs.
- We will seek additional publicity from the media and continue to grow promotional partnerships with organizations that share our values.

On behalf of all our staff,

Respectfully submitted,

Rob Butcher