July 25, 2018

Dear Barracuda Swim Community:

We would like to thank the Barracudas for choosing to honor our daughter, Abby, by creating an award in her name. Abby loved the Barracudas and the Montgomery County Swim League because for two months a year, it allowed swimming to be both a team sport and a sport full of joy! Those two months made Abby’s summers special. She loved going to water parks and movies with her teammates, dressing up for the meets, shouting out the Barracuda cheers and enthusiastically cheering for her teammates and pushing herself to be the best swimmer she could be.

Abby also loved the thrill and excitement of competing and worked hard on her technique and conditioning year-round to become the best swimmer she could be. However, what she looked forward to most every year was swimming for the Barracudas with her summer swim friends. A bad race or a disappointing meet were quickly overshadowed by the camaraderie and support of her Barracuda friends and coaches, fun lunches after the “A” meets and hanging out and playing in the big pool with her teammates after the home meets.

Through swimming, and particularly swimming for the Barracudas, Abby learned the most important life lessons that served her so well and made her such a happy, self-assured and accomplished teenager. First, if you fully commit yourself to an endeavor and continually work hard, you will succeed. Second, no matter how hard you work at something, you will have both good days and bad days. Third, learning how to accept and make sense of the bad days -- the bitter disappointments -- that are inevitable for swimmers, makes you a better, stronger, more resilient person who can cope with all challenges that life presents. Fourth, the good days are more enjoyable and the bad days are less disappointing if you can share them with friends and family that you love.

Because many of Abby’s most exciting and joyful moments occurred through her participation on this swim team and because she learned so much from the experience, we are profoundly touched that the Barracudas have chosen to honor Abby by creating this beautiful award, “The Abby Shapiro Spirit Award.” The award, as conceived by the Barracudas, rewards one swimmer each year who demonstrates the following attributes that Abby exemplified:

* Hard work and commitment to achieving personal excellence;
* enthusiasm for and enjoyment of the experience of being part of the team;
* never too cool or too old to dress the theme for a meet or look for opportunities to make swimming fun;
* a positive attitude towards the sport and her teammates; and
* an indomitable spirit.

We hope that this award and Abby’s memory will inspire many other Barracuda swimmers to emulate these values and become better swimmers, better teammates and better people both today and in the future. We look forward to celebrating this award with its third recipient today, and we look forward to celebrating it with many other Barracuda swimmers, parents and coaches in the years to come. Thank you.

Trudy and Rick