



Laurel Hill Tritons
Parent and Swimmer
Handbook

Summer 2026

www.LHTritons.org

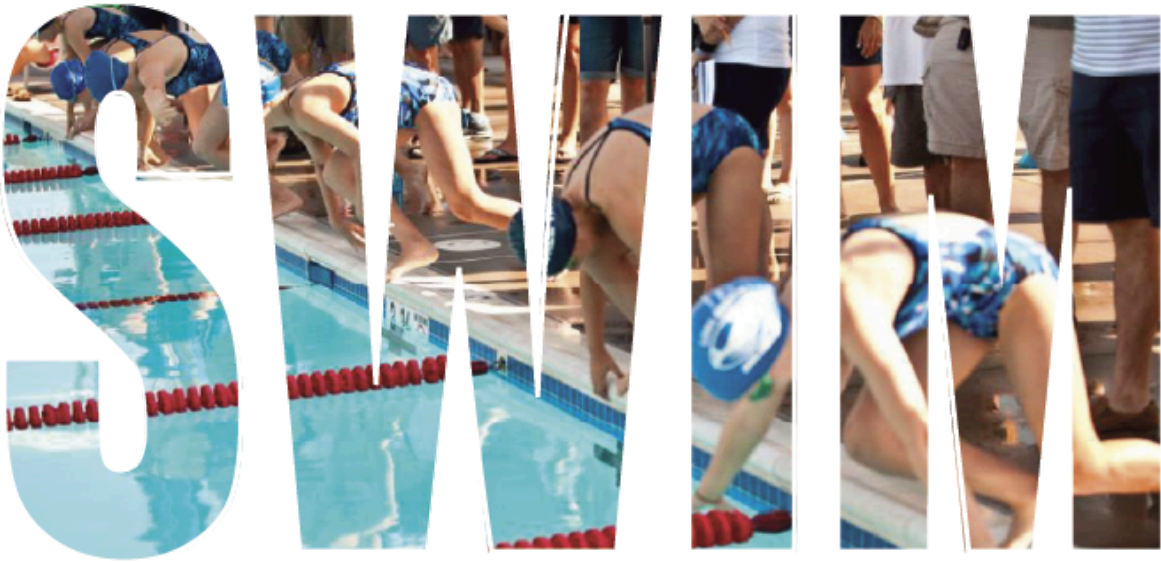
(revised 5/29/2026)

Introduction

As a parent of a Tritons swimmer, if you're wondering **"what should I be doing?"** or **"how do swim meets work?"** - this handbook is meant to be your reference guide. We'll cover **practices, time trials, "B" meets, and "A" meets, volunteering, social events,** and more.

Your go-tos for information and assistance during the swim season are our **Team Representatives (Team Reps)** - they are designated by the **Laurel Hill Community Swim Team Board of Directors** to run every aspect of the swim team and are the representatives of the Tritons swim team to other swim teams and to the **Northern Virginia Swimming League (NVSL; <https://www.mynvsl.com>)**.

Let's jump in and...



About the Tritons swim team...

The mission of the Laurel Hill Community Swim Team is to promote the personal development and character of its athletes while advancing a spirit of community, comradery and fellowship within the Laurel Hill community and surrounding areas. This is accomplished through an enthusiastic spirit of volunteerism among member families who jointly fulfill the various duties that lead to the team's success. Winning is always our goal, but success is measured by the quality of the experience for each of our athletes in terms of measurable personal improvement and overall well-being.

Team Reps

If you need information about the team, or have questions about any of the team events, meets, or other activities, please reach out to our **Team Reps** by emailing **teamreps@LHTritons.org**.

🌐 Team Representatives - Laurel Hill Tritons
(<https://www.lhtritons.org/team-representatives>)

Board of Directors

Any questions about financial or other administrative activities of the team can be directed to our **Board of Directors** by emailing **directors@LHTritons.org**.

🌐 Board of Directors - Laurel Hill Tritons
(<https://www.lhtritons.org/board-of-directors>)

Find us on the web...

- 🌐 Home - Laurel Hill Tritons
(<http://www.LHTritons.org>)

And follow us on social media:

- 🌐 Laurel Hill Tritons | Facebook
(<https://www.facebook.com/groups/lhtritons/>)
- 🌐 Laurel Hill Tritons (@lhtritons) • Instagram profile
(<https://www.instagram.com/lhtritons/>)

SwimTopia

SwimTopia is the online platform our team uses to manage swim team activities and communications throughout the season. Families use it to register swimmers, sign up swimmers for meets, sign up for volunteer jobs, view **practice and [meet schedules](#)**, receive team updates, track swimmer results and times, and access important team information all in one place. It helps keep the season organized and makes it easier for families, coaches, and volunteers to stay connected.

Download **SwimTopia Mobile** to receive Team Alerts for weather delays, sign up for meets, view your volunteer commitments, swim results, and more.

More Info: 🌐 SwimTopia Mobile App - Overview & Parent Info
(<https://help.swimtopia.com/hc/en-us/articles/360028834791-SwimTopia-Mobile-App-Overview-Parent-Info>)

Be sure to [Subscribe](#) and turn on notifications in the SwimTopia app to get Team Alerts about weather delays and other urgent news from the Team Reps and coaches.

Important Stuff to Know

Expectations for Parents

- 1. Be a supportive volunteer!** Nearly all of the adults involved in our swim team are volunteers - other parents, friends, and fellow Laurel Hill and surrounding community neighbors. Help the team be successful by being positive, encouraging and supporting the other volunteers, and, of course - be a volunteer!
- 2. Ensure your swimmer has appropriate skills.** Each swimmer must be able to swim the length of the swimming pool in order to be eligible for the swim team. We're here to help your swimmer become a better swimmer, and hone in on better stroke technique - but to be fair to the rest of the team, they must be able to swim. For swimmers that are not quite ready for the swim team, we have a **Little Tritons** program to get them ready for the swim team.
- 3. Read and follow NVSL sportsmanship guidelines.** Let's all promote a fun and enjoyable experience by cheering and keeping interactions positive! Negative and unsportsmanlike behavior is to be avoided. If your child is subject to inappropriate conduct or if you witness any questionable incident, please report it to the **Team Reps**. If the Team Reps are not available, report it to the **coach** or to a member of the team's **Board of Directors**.
(https://www.mynvsl.com/file/36494/2024_Standards_of_Conduct_and_Oaths_2019_.pdf)
- 4. Honor volunteer commitments.** The team relies on parent volunteers for every event, and if you sign up for an event we are counting on you to be there to ensure a successful event. If for some reason you are unable to attend, let the **Volunteer Coordinator** know as soon as possible, preferably at least 2 days in advance of the event.
- 5. Avoid interrupting coaches during practices or meets.** Practices are to be focused on ensuring swimmers are getting the attention they need to improve their skills. If you have anything you'd like to discuss, please reach out to our **Team Reps** first. If you have to talk to the coach(es), reach out privately before or after practices or meets, rather than interrupting practices or meets. If you have a concern or complaint regarding a coach, reach out to a **Team Rep** privately to address - public critiques of coaches are discouraged without first trying to resolve any issues through our Team Reps.

Expectations for Swimmers

- 1. Do your best!** Be the best you can be, strive for improvement, and represent the team and the community in a positive way. That's more important than being the *fastest* swimmer!
- 2. Pay attention to the coach(es) and other team volunteers.** In order to keep practices and meets running smoothly, follow instructions and pay attention to the coach(es) and other team volunteers. Disruptions aren't fair to other swimmers - let's keep our time in the pool positive and fun!
- 3. Honor your commitments.** Show up for practices, and participate in as many meets as you are able. "B" meets are a good way to show the coach(es) your abilities, identify areas for improvement, and to get acquainted with how meets are run. Coach(es) will make decision on filling limited spots in "A" meets based on what they know about each swimmer's abilities from practices and prior meet event participation. Be sure to indicate your availability for all "A" and "B" meets in SwimTopia.

Swim Team Eligibility

Laurel Hill community members, or families from outside of the Laurel Hill community that have [Associate Memberships](#) for the Laurel Hill pool, can register swimmers between the ages of 5 and 18, as long as the swimmer can swim the length of the swimming pool without assistance.

Little Tritons Program

Our Little Tritons program is for children at least four years of age until approximately seven years of age. Swimmers that participate in the Little Tritons program must be able to learn in the pool without a parent. This is our developmental program that prepares new swimmers through close instruction by a team coach or assistant coach with the goal to graduate the Little Tritons swimmers to the Tritons competitive swim team. These practices are not intended for first-time swimmers.

Practices

Practice times are normally finalized when registration goes live each spring, and the information is also posted on our team website: www.lhtritons.org.

Swimmers should come to practice regularly, be on time and be prepared to do their best. If you expect your child to be absent for an extended period of time, please notify the Team Reps.

Practices are scheduled by age groups, and you should plan to have your swimmer swim with the appropriate age group when possible. If you would like to request that your swimmer swim at a different time than the assigned age group, please contact the Team Reps to determine if it is possible.

After school practices typically start the day after the Memorial Day holiday weekend until Fairfax County Public Schools last day of school. Morning practices typically start the day after the last school day for FCPS. The Little Tritons program typically starts on the Monday the week after FCPS school ends. Practices are held Monday-Friday until the day before the Divisionals championship meet - where the fastest swimmers from all teams in the division compete (see the **Summer Swim Meets** section for additional information about **Divisionals**).

Parents - please avoid interrupting our coaches or the swimmers during practices! If you have questions or want to discuss anything, check with the Team Reps or arrange to speak with the coaches before or after practices.

What gear do I need?

Swimsuits

The Tritons select a team swimsuit that can be purchased, if desired. However, a team swimsuit is not required for swim meets or practices. For swim meets, swimmers should wear a swimsuit that is comfortable for racing, and if a team swimsuit is not purchased, a blue or black suit should be worn for swim meets, if possible. For practices, any swimsuit is acceptable, but we do encourage wearing a swimsuit similar to what would be worn for meets.

Swim Caps

Swim caps are not required, but we highly recommend swimmers use a swim cap, especially if their hair is long. For swim meets, swimmers wearing a swim cap must wear either a Tritons swim cap or a cap without a team name/logo-- NVSL does not allow swimmers to wear caps with other team names for swim meets. Swimmers will receive a latex swim cap as part of their registration. Typically the team will also offer a short window in late April/early May when an optional custom silicone swim cap can be purchased (with or without a name added).

Swim Goggles

We highly recommend goggles. Swimmers can check with local swim retailers for help selecting the right goggles if they do not already have a pair that works well for them. Once your swimmer finds a pair that they like, you may want to buy a few extras. Goggles frequently break or suddenly start to leak and are easy to lose, especially for the younger swimmers.

**Don't forget to bring your
water bottle, swim bag,
goggles, caps, and a towel to
meets and practices!**

Summer Swim Meets

Swim meets are either “home” meets (at the Laurel Hill community swimming pool) - or “away” meets (at one of the area swimming pools where other NVSL teams have their home base).

Team families and volunteers begin preparing for home meets the evening before the meet. While away meets have fewer volunteer roles to be filled, swimmers need to arrive on time for warmups, and parking and seating is often limited. For some away meets, it may be helpful to bring camp chairs for swimmers and family spectators.

Meets tend to last 3-4 hours, and we highly encourage swimmers to stick around and cheer for teammates until the end.

You can see what your swimmer will be swimming typically the day before the meet by checking in the SwimTopia app

Time Trials

This is a home event that will typically be scheduled the Saturday before the first NVSL “A” meet. This event is when all Tritons swimmers will swim all strokes that they are able to swim legally (or are very near to doing so) so that times can be recorded. The coaches will use these times to help determine which events your swimmer might be best fitted to swim in swim meets. For this reason, it is important for every swimmer to participate, if possible. If your swimmer is unable to attend Time Trials, please notify the Team Reps so that arrangements can be made for your swimmer to be timed at a practice.

Time Trials will also be run like a regular meet and requires volunteers. It is a great opportunity for new swim team families to get an understanding of how a swim meet works, and also to see the different volunteer roles in action. Because this meet is only for Tritons swimmers, we will need more volunteers than in other meets where other teams supply volunteers to help run the meet too.

"A" Meets *(Saturday morning meets)*

Saturday morning "A" meets are when two divisional teams compete head to head in a dual meet. Coaches will select swimmers for these meets based on recorded times as well as the needs of the team and the availability of individual swimmers. For this reason, it is important to designate through SwimTopia when your swimmer is available for each Saturday meet by the Wednesday before the meet, even if you aren't sure whether your child is one of the fastest in their age group on a particular stroke. There is always a chance that the Tritons will need your swimmer to fill a roll in an "A" meet!

The five other teams in our division will compete with the Tritons on consecutive Saturday mornings. Each team enters three swimmers per age and gender group in events for the four individual strokes (freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke, and butterfly). There are also four-person age-specific relays, individual medleys, and mixed-age relays. An individual swimmer may only swim in a maximum of two individual events per meet. Swimmers may also participate in two relays--age-group specific four-person relays or mixed-age relays.

"A" meets are scored, and a division champion is named based on results of "A" meets.

"B" Meets *(Monday night meets)*

Monday night "B" meets are considered developmental and are not scored. They provide an opportunity for all swimmers to practice their skills. Swimmers are eligible for all events, but typically swimmers do not swim in events that they swam in the previous Saturday "A" meet. Swimmers may enter up to two individual events, including the Individual Medley (IM) event. There are no other relay events in the Monday night "B" meets. In order to be entered into events for a "B" Meet, you must indicate your swimmer is available in SwimTopia, typically by the end of the day on the Friday before the meet.

Relay Carnivals (*Divisional & All Stars*)

The Tritons typically participate in the **Divisional Relay Carnival**, which is usually held on the Wednesday evening between the third and fourth “A” meets of the season. In this meet, all teams in each division converge on one pool for an evening of freestyle and medley relay races. This meet is scored, and only consists of relay events. Division Coordinators from all of NVSL will meet and the relay teams with the eighteen fastest times across all divisions in each event are selected to participate in the **All Star Relay Carnival** the following Wednesday.

Divisionals & All Stars

Each NVSL division has its own championship meet, commonly referred to as **Divisionals**. Each team in the division is allowed to enter two swimmers in each event, and each swimmer can enter no more than two events. If a team does not have two swimmers for an event, the other teams can bid in other swimmers to fill the empty lanes. Swimmer selection is decided by the coaches and is based on swimmer preference and qualification as one of the fastest two swimmers available for each event, age group, and gender. The Divisionals meet is unscored and consists of only individual events, including the 100 meter Individual Medley (IM).

Swimmers with the eighteen (18) fastest times at Divisionals in each event, age group, and gender across all divisions of NVSL qualify for **All Stars**, which is typically held a week after Divisionals. All Stars has approximately 600 swimmers plus parents, coaches, and officials converging on a single pool for a meet that takes about six hours. The Tritons typically have a few swimmers who qualify for All Stars each year.

What is that stroke?

If you're not a former swimmer, you probably need a primer on the different the strokes and their rules. Here's a brief description of the strokes and NVSL rules. Teams in other leagues may have slightly different rules. The rules are the same regardless of the age or skill level of the swimmer.

Freestyle

Freestyle is defined as any means of swimming across the pool. Any stroke and kick are acceptable. There are, however, a few things you cannot do when swimming this event: (1) you cannot walk on the bottom or pull yourself along using the lane lines; and (2) in a 50-meter race (two lengths of the pool) you must touch the wall at the 25-meter end before touching the wall at the 50-meter end. This may seem obvious, but sometimes swimmers miss the wall at the turning end of the pool.

Backstroke

Like the freestyle, almost anything goes on the backstroke as long as you stay on your back. As swimmers progress, they will learn to guide off the lane lines, use the overhead backstroke flags and the lane line markings to know where they are in the pool, and count strokes from the flags to the wall.

Backstroke starts are different from all others because the swimmer is in the water, feet planted against the wall, and hanging on to either another swimmer's legs or the lip on the pool awaiting the starter's signal. If hanging on to legs, the legs must be grabbed below the knee. Swimmers cannot use the legs of people serving in an official capacity for the meet (such as timers or coaches).

Once a swimmer learns the backstroke flip turn for events longer than 25 meters- it is the one exception to staying on your back, but can be used only as part of a turn (not a finish) at the pool wall.

Breaststroke

The breaststroke has two components: the kick and the arm pull. The pull and its recovery must both be under the breast and cannot extend further back than the waist area. The kick is a "frog" kick and the toes must be pointed outward during the propulsive part of the kick. The arm pull and kick must be in an alternating sequence and the elbows must stay below the water except for tagging the wall at the finish. Breaststroke turns and finishes require a simultaneous two hand touch.

Butterfly

A properly executed butterfly (or "fly") stroke is probably the hardest stroke for most swimmers to perfect. There are two components of the fly: the arm pull and the kick. The arm pull must be an over the water recovery (elbows breaking the surface of the water) with the arms moving simultaneously. The kick is a dolphin style kick with legs and hips moving simultaneously. Unlike the breaststroke, there is no requirement to alternate the kick and pull. Turns and finishes require a simultaneous two-hand touch at the wall.

Individual Medley (IM)

The individual medley (or "IM") is when an individual swims each of the four strokes in the following sequence: butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke, freestyle. We swim a 100-meter IM, which means that each stroke is 25 meters, or one pool length. In a 100-meter IM, every turn is a stroke change and the stroke finish rules apply for that turn. This means that no backstroke flip turns are allowed.

Relays

There are two kinds of relays: freestyle and medley. Both involve a team of four swimmers, each swimming one quarter of the total distance. In the freestyle relay, each swimmer swims the freestyle. In the medley relay, the sequence is backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly and freestyle.

In all relays, each swimmer must wait until the previous swimmer touches the wall before the swimmer's feet leave the wall. Running starts or pushes from teammates are not allowed.

What is a DQ?

Stroke and turn judges (see **Volunteer Roles**) observe swimmers during races to ensure all strokes, turns, and finishes comply with NVSL rules. If a judge clearly observes a rule violation (such as an incorrect stroke, kick, turn, or finish), they report the infraction to the referee, who then issues a disqualification (DQ). Disqualifications are based only on clear rule violations that are personally observed by an official.

The **Technical Rules** section of [NVSL's Handbook](#) is a great resource for specific information how your swimmer can improve technique to avoid a DQ.

<https://www.mynvsl.com/advertisers.pdf>

Some of the more common reasons for DQ'ing are described below.

Freestyle:

- Failure to touch the wall at the turning end of the pool
- Walking on the bottom
- Pulling on the lane lines
- Exiting the pool before swimming the specified distance

Backstroke:

- Rolling past vertical towards the breast at any time except during a flip turn
- Leaving the wall after a turn past vertical towards the breast
- Improper flip turn

Breaststroke:

- Incorrect kick, such as a Scissors kick or Flutter kick
- Non-simultaneous two-handed touch or one-handed touch at turn or finish
- Toes not pointed outward during the propulsive part of the kick
- More than one stroke underwater with arms fully extended at start or turn
 - Head didn't break surface by conclusion of second arm pull underwater after a start or turn
- Arm recovery past waist except on first stroke after start or turn

Butterfly:

- Non-simultaneous or one-handed touch at the turn or finish
- Non-simultaneous leg movement during kicks
- Arms don't break water surface during recovery (judged at the elbows)
- Non-simultaneous arm movement during recovery

How will my swimmer know they DQ'd?

When a Stroke and Turn judge observes a swimmer DQ, and the referee approves the observation, a slip describing the violation is provided to the Team Reps and the reason is recorded as part of the "A" meet data entry. Coaches and Team Reps will work with swimmers that DQ to explain what the violation was, and to work on correcting the issue to avoid DQs going forward.

Protesting Disqualifications

The Team Rep is the only person who can officially question a disqualification or any other call by an official. If something happens involving your swimmer which you do not think is right, talk to the coach or the Team Rep. The Team Rep will initiate action within 48 hours of the meet ending in accordance with NVSL rules if he/she considers it to be appropriate.

A Note to Parents on DQs

DQs are a part of the learning process. It is best that your child be disqualified for an error in their event than to continue to repeat the same behavior. Most swimmers learn quickly to correct the problem after they have been DQ'd. Don't look at a DQ as a negative--use it to further encourage your swimmer to improve their stroke skills.

Tritons Volunteer Policy

The Tritons rely on **parent volunteers** to ensure the success of all of our team events--Saturday “A” meets, Monday “B” meets, and other team events such as Time Trials, TGIFs, team photo day, team breakfast day, and end of summer parties.

The volunteer roles described here are for A and B “home” meets. Although we need volunteers for “away” meets, fewer volunteers are necessary for “away” meets. **Each family with a swimmer on the swim team** is asked to volunteer for a total of **20 points** each summer, and the number of points credited for each volunteer position will be listed in the signups in SwimTopia. For **families with only Little Tritons swimmers**, the volunteer commitment is **5 points**. Signups for volunteer positions will be posted in SwimTopia prior to each meet or event.

These volunteer opportunities are a great way to meet like-minded members of the community while having fun and supporting a common cause.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to help out!

When registering your swimmers, each family must submit a \$250 deposit through SwimTopia via credit card. This deposit will be not be charged if the family earns the required volunteer points.

For questions about any of the volunteer roles, or how you can make sure you reach the required number of volunteer points, contact our **Team Reps**.

Volunteer Roles

Some volunteer roles will need to be filled for both home meets and away meets, and some are only filled during home meets. There will also be volunteer roles to fill for TGIF, team photo day, end of year party, or other special events.

The following table includes a brief description of some of the roles during meets, and an indication of the number of volunteers that are typically needed to fulfill the needs during a meet.

<u>Volunteer Position</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number needed for each meet</u>
Referee	The Referee is the chief official for each swim meet. He/she is responsible for the conduct of the meets and is the final authority on the interpretation and enforcement of all swimming rules. <i>*This volunteer role requires completion of NVSL training every two years.</i>	1 (home meets only)
Starter	The Starter is responsible for ensuring that all swimmers are given a fair and equitable start. At the Referee's signal, the Starter instructs the swimmers to "take your mark" and starts the race using the electron starting system. <i>*This volunteer role requires completion of NVSL training every two years.</i>	1 (home meets only)
Stroke and Turn Judges	Stroke and Turn Judges are responsible for ensuring that all swimmers obey all the rules for the stroke that they are swimming once the race has started. Stroke and Turn judges are stationed at each end of the pool. If a Stroke and Turn Judge sees a violation of the rules, he/she raises his/her hand to signify that an infraction has occurred, records the disqualification (DQ) on a DQ slip, and presents it to the Referee for review. Stroke and Turn Judges must be impartial and fair to all swimmers. <i>*This volunteer role requires completion of NVSL training every 2 years.</i>	2
Relay Take-Off Judges	Relay Take-off Judges ensure that each swimmer touches the wall before the next swimmer in the relay leaves the deck.	4

<u>Volunteer Position</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number needed for each meet</u>
Marshals	Marshals maintain order and ensure safety during warm-ups and throughout the meet. They are stationed strategically around the pool deck and are responsible for crowd control, safety in and out of the pool, and managing pool deck traffic.	<u>2</u>
Head Timer	The Head Timer collects the timecards from the timers, reviews them for accuracy and completeness, and forwards them to the table workers. He/she is responsible for giving commands to “clear watches,” signaling to the Referee that Timers are ready for the next event and starts two extra watches in case a lane timer’s watch fails to start.	1
Timers	Timers start their watches on the strobe light from the starting system and stop their watches when the swimmer touches the wall.	9
Volunteer Attendance	Takes attendance for volunteers at each event or swim meet and ensures that all volunteer positions are filled as needed.	1
Table Workers	Head Data Entry, Data Verifier, Place Recorder and Awards Clerk work at the data table for meets to record and verify the results, record the place results, and prepare ribbon awards for each meet.	4

<u>Volunteer Position</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Number needed for each meet</u>
Announcer	The Announcer broadcasts each home event, the swimmers, and the results. You announce the event, swimmers for each heat and then the results, along with any other pertinent information such as birthdays or new team records . The Announcer, along with the Referee, is responsible for keeping the meet moving in a steady fashion.	1 <i>(home meets only)</i>
DJ	The DJ is responsible for playing music for the meet during warm ups, long delays for DQs, changing timer positions, or other delays. The DJ takes care of set up and breakdown of the sound equipment for each meet.	1 <i>(home meets only)</i>
Clerks of Course	The Clerk of Course functions as the “gatekeeper” for all swimmers in our meets. The Clerks of Course organize swimmers in the holding area and gets them to the right lanes for the correct race.	1 lead 1 assistant
Swimmer Attendance	Takes attendance for swimmers prior to the start of the meet.	1
Concessions Workers	Concessions workers setup and take down the concessions area, man the concessions tables, grill, and other important roles to ensure that our concessions are running smoothly.	~5-8

Volunteers are the backbone of our team! If you need assistance identifying a volunteer role that works for your family, contact a Team Rep!
(<https://www.lhtritons.org/volunteer-opportunities>)