

Swim team looking for more Sharks

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Growing up, Emalle Hartwick participated in a lot of sports, trying to find her niche within athletics.

“My mom always wanted me to be active — tee-ball, soccer, all of it. It just was never my thing,” said Hartwick, a 16-year-old Del Norte High School student.

Then, six years ago, she found her thing as a Shark, the mascot name for the Crescent City Swim Club.

“I had a friend on the team before me, it was her first year. We met around fifth grade. She said, ‘Hey you should check it out.’ I’ve been on it ever since,” Hartwick said.

Hartwick encourages other youth to check out the club, and February is the perfect time to do so. The Swim Club is hosting signups throughout February on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Fred Enderit Municipal Swimming Pool, located at 1000 Play St.

After years of watching Emalle compete, her mom, Robin, stepped up to be president of the club, which is completely operated by volunteer parents and coaches.

“There’s a whole benefit for kids, the physical activity, plus swimming is fun,” Robin Hartwick said, adding winter is the perfect time to compete in swimming. “So many sports in Del Norte County kids go, yuck, I don’t want to go outside during the winter. We’re not a year-round team.”

She said the club used to operate through the summer months, but it couldn’t compete with all the other students’ activities once school was out. So, the team is active from September to end of May.

To join the Crescent City Swim Club, members have to also join USA Swimming. There is a \$73 yearly fee and a \$65 a month membership fee. Robin Hartwick said qualified low-income residents can get reduced fees to join.

She said the fees go toward two big expenses — the club rents the entire pool four days a week for practices and that comes to \$2,500 a month for all six lanes. Also, they travel great distances for their meets.

The Sharks are part of PAC Swim Zone 3, but must travel to other zones — south to Fort Brag, Napa Valley and Santa Rosa and north to Medford, Grants Pass and Eugene, Ore.

“It’s nice to go into Oregon. The gas and motels are cheaper, but Fort Brag is really nice. The pool there is definitely top of the line,” Robin Hartwick said.

She added that while the swim club is a competitive team with competitive meets, the nice thing is everybody competes. There’s no first stringers or bench warmers.

“It’s a team sport. With relays and individual events. It’s the duality of sport that so many of our swimmers find appealing,” Robin said. “The goal is usually competing against yourself, beat your own last best time, growing yourself. Especially if you’re not a super competitive swimmer.”

That’s why coaches emphasize working on speed, agility, strength and technique. After three seasons as secretary and another two as assistant coach, Kala Boyer stepped up to be head coach this season.

Boyer, 33, said she swam growing up at the YMCA in Grants Pass, Ore. Her two daughters swam for the team in the past, but are sitting out this season. She’s trying to talk them into rejoining and recommends other students check out the club.

“It is a great opportunity. We’re always surprised we don’t get more high schoolers. It’s a safe way to stay in shape in the off season,” Boyer said.

The club currently has 27 members ages 5 to 18 and draws from both Del Norte and Curry counties. Robin Hartwick said you do have to already know how to swim join.

“We don’t have as many clubs around anymore because so many cities don’t have pools. Del Norte and Curry counties, Humboldt and Grants Pass have clubs. But Humboldt doesn’t host meets because they don’t have a pool,” she said.

Aedan Bailey, 13, was talked into trying out for the team last week.

“My dad wanted me to do it. But I started really enjoying it,” said Bailey, who is homeschooled and currently plays no other sports. “It’s fun and it’s a good workout. I’ll keep doing it for at least three years.”

Robin Hartwick scheduled a meet for the team March 14-15 in Eugene, Ore. and an April swim-a-thon here.

Practices are 5-7 p.m. Monday through Thursday and Hartwick said members are only encouraged to attend many as they can.

The Sharks have a public Facebook page — Crescent City Swim Club Fans. To learn more information, contact Robin at CCSCboard@hotmail.com or 954-2492.