

Swim Across America

By Jon Blank

The more streamlined a body is in the water, the more efficient propulsion can be. This is as true for swimmers as it is for boats. Unlike swimmers, boats are often moored for days or months at a time - that's a problem. Microorganisms love to grow on boat hulls. The resulting mass of algae, bacteria, and barnacles leads to increased drag and poor performance. So, support Swim Across America by taking part in the "Triangle Indoor Water Festival"!

Huh?

This isn't a cut-and-paste error, though it appears to be so.

Dr. John Cavanagh is a leading researcher at NC State University in Raleigh. His lab is both a major beneficiary and a donor to the Triangle Indoor Water Festival, taking place at Cary's Triangle Aquatic Center on September 21. The "Triangle Indoor Water Festival" is a North Carolina component of the nationwide "Swim Across America" charity. "Swim Across America" is a swim-focused fundraising event to benefit cancer research.

Dr. Cavanagh's serendipitous experiment with a new type of anti-fouling paint may lead to improved effectiveness of cancer drugs. It so happens that while testing a series of compounds that decrease the adhesion of bacteria on boat hulls, Cavanagh found that those same chemicals increased the effectiveness of anti-cancer drugs by a thousand-fold. What serendipity! His attention, and the direction of his lab's research rapidly shifted from keeping boat bottoms clean to saving lives.

I've visited the Cavanagh lab with Triangle Indoor Water Festival founder (and cancer survivor) Mary DeMelia. What an impressive laboratory, with highly specialized instruments requiring liquid nitrogen refrigeration and several tons of specialized anti-vibration setups, as well as the requisite reagents and retorts and pheresis columns. Obviously, this laboratory is expensive to maintain in order to advance scientific goals. Mary, who is incredibly positive about the Swim Across America event, has designated Dr. Cavanagh's lab for the proceeds of the Triangle Indoor Water Festival. She's ensured that this event will be not only a great charitable function, but lots of fun for the volunteers and donors. Dr. Cavanagh and his laboratory staff are so impressed by Mary's enthusiasm that they are also signed on as participants.

The Festival offers open-water equivalents ranging from 1/2 mile to 2 mile swims, as well as (a first for the entire Swim Across America nationwide program) a water polo game. So, use your streamlined and efficient vessel to help support cancer research - sign up for the Triangle Indoor Water Festival on September 21. You can contribute to a great cause and have fun at the same time.