Second Annual Shadow Seals Open Water Event Produced Nothing but Smiles and Miles!

The second annual Shadow Seals Open Water event was held Saturday, September 14, 2014 at Madison Park on Seattle's beautiful Lake Washington.

Shadow Seals is a local swim team for athletes with physical disabilities coached by Kiko van Zandt, Guillermo Romano and Justin Fleming. The Team supports athletes of all skill levels and has produced national record holders, world record holders, and Paralympians. Open water is the next frontier for this talented group.

Swimmers: Abbey Nardella, Josh Anderson, Henri Coronado- Volta (Cascade) Delaney Cummings (Cascade), Chris Junk, Kayla Wheeler, Madilyn Murphey (VSST), Katy Shimabukuro, Jesper Ford, Praman White, Olivia Lautman (Wave), Courtney Gross (Issaquah Swim Team)

Volunteers: Dawn Jaeger, Mary Lippold, Wade Praeger, Ralph Busch, Ryker Lammers, Karl Voss, Michael Scott, Tim Rood, Hanna Letinich, Tom Anderson, Dennis Junk, Matthew Volta, Charlie Van Zandt, Chuck Fleming , Joyce Wheeler, Denise Reibman, Kirby Lautman, Scott Lautman, Chris Lautman, Claire Lautman, Maddie Maider, Dan Robinson, Sami Robbins, Marisa Chang, Johnny Van Velthuyzen, Michelle McRae, Guillermo Romano, Kiko Van Zandt, Mackenzie Cummings, James Cummings, Steve Vela, J.P. Nardella, Andrew Malinak, Corey Cote

A year ago we had 7 participants in the event. This year we doubled our participants to 14 and tripled the number of volunteers! This type of event needs volunteers on land, in the water, and on the water to provide a safe swimming environment.

The Greater Seattle swimming community came out to support this fun and inspirational event en masse. Local Masters Swimmers (Lake Washington Masters, Blue Wave, GLAD, NEO and Queen Anne) along with US Swimming athletes, triathletes, friends and parents were ke y in supporting this event.

The day started with Scott Lautman conducting the safety briefing followed by a short talk by Dan Robinson about his recent successful crossing of the English Channel. Dan's talk encouraged our swimmers to test their abilities and stretch their limits.

Each Shadow Seal swimmer was paired up with an experienced open water swimmer and was assigned a kayak/paddle board escort. Individual swimmers were kept track of by a crew working out of a motorized Zodiac and a beach crew that tracked swimmers going in and coming out of the water.

Two Shadow Seals swimmers, Henry and Madison, exceeded expectations and completed the popular out and back course from Madison Park to the Seattle Tennis Club at just over a mile and a half! All of the athletes completed their half mile or mile course successfully and without a wetsuit!

Our tradition of picking up a rock from the beach as a souvenir and reminder of the accomplishment was followed by another hallowed tradition, a trip to the Madison Park Bakery. Post race activities included an unlimited tab at the bakery, sitting in the sunshine, reflecting on a great morning of Swimming and looking forward to the next adventure.

A big thanks to the parents who entrusted their athletes to us, the coaches who provided the athletes the skills and confidence to attempt open water swimming, and the volunteers that put on a safe and challenging event. Special thanks to Chris Lautman for planning and organizing the Shadow Seals Open Water event again this year.

To read more about the Shadow Seals or to support this group of athletes, please visit the Shadow Seals at http://www.shadowsealsswimming.org/ .