



Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center already has 'monumental impact' to area, much beyond

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center has had a monumental impact in Edwardsville since it was launched last year and it was never more apparent than the past two weekends, first with a **Sprint Spectacular Meet** and then this past weekend's **MLK Celebration Meet**.

Bob Rettle, director of the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center, beamed with pride through both weekends at what the new complex has already become.

The Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center came from a multi-million dollar donation to Edwardsville School District 7 to build the center with an Olympic-sized pool at its sports complex.

The Charles and Sharon Fruit Foundation made the donation for the aquatic center and complex. **President Sharon Fruit** presented the donation and at the time said she hoped that every student has the chance to learn how to swim. The center was named the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center in honor of the late Chuck Fruit, an Edwardsville native and a member of Edwardsville High School's Class of 1965.

Chuck Fruit was a former marketing executive with Coca-Cola and Anheuser-Busch. Chuck was a college swimmer and had a lifelong passion for swimming. The donation was made to make that passion last for generations into the future and it is accomplishing that, Rettle said over the weekend.

Rettle said he, the swimmers and swim parents in the Edwardsville School District 7 couldn't be more proud of the new facility and what it is offering for so many swimmers throughout the district, region and much beyond.

"We had a lot of participation in both meets," Rettle said. "We had 350 kids last year in the Sprint Spectacular and this year we had 586. A lot of new swimmers experienced championship swimming in this pool with these meets. There were a total of 400-plus swimmers for each of the three days of the MLK Celebration Meet."

Rettle said the new facility has had an incredible amount of economic value and just in general has spread the love of swimming to many more young kids with the swimming partnership for Edwardsville School District 7, the Edwardsville YMCA and Breakers. District 7 also has a strong Special Olympics team and Leslie Roderick has been working with those athletes in the pool with future meets planned, Rettle said.

Swimmers have made Olympic Trials cuts in the pool, Rettle said, including Edwardsville's own Bailey Grinter. He said the pool is definitely fast, proven with the Trials times.

Edwardsville High School boys and girls head coach Christian Rhotten and his team members are making a positive name throughout the state with several top finishes over the past two years. The team trains daily at the Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center. Physical education classes focused on swimming area also held in the facility by Edwardsville School District 7. In only two years, Rhotten has already become one of the more highly regarded coaches in the state with his boys and girls programs.

On Sundays, Parkway, CSP have been renting the pool to train in the long-course environment. Other college teams have made the trek to train in the facility. The Chuck Fruit Aquatic Center Pool can be switched from long course to short course, which makes it multi-dimensional, Rettle said.

Columbia, Mo., Parkway and other Missouri clubs were outstanding teams who participated in the MLK Meet, Rettle said.

For the future, Rettle only sees bright things for the Chuck Fruit Center with more events and continued service to the community and region.

“We expect great things for the future,” he said.

