

*A Bi-Monthly Publication of your Arizona Local Masters Swim Committee*

## Angels in the Ocean

*Contributed by June Hussey*

Like climbers of the world's tallest mountains, some swimmers are never satisfied with their last swim, however long, however fast. They are always looking for the next great challenge, for reasons perhaps they alone can understand. Why do these insatiable swimmers endure the punishment they do, mile after mile, year after year? Because they can? Because it rewards them? Because they're in search of some inner knowledge that is only accessible over the edge?

The reason Fred Brooke repeatedly swims great distances across open stretches of water is crystal clear, and surprisingly sound. He does it because, he says, "it feels selfishly good to give."

Having taken up ocean swimming at the age of 50, Fred Brooke, now 54, has taken his love of open water swimming and turned it into passion with a very palpable purpose: helping kids with cancer.

In 2001, Fred completed his first marathon swim (six miles) across Buzzard's Bay on Cape Cod strictly as a personal challenge. (He wanted to answer every ancient mariner's question, 'if I fell off a boat, would I be able to swim to shore?') Having accomplished this feat, he dedicated his

next year's swim across Long Island Sound to helping Angela "Angel" Uihlein, a young girl from his home state of Connecticut who was battling Leukemia. That would be only the beginning of Fred's charitable swimming endeavors.

Inspired by the strength and perseverance that Angel and many other young people exhibit in their battle against cancer, Fred and his friend Lynn McCarthy started Angel Charitable Trust, a 501 (C) (3) in honor of its namesake Angel (now 15 and cancer free!) The Angel Charitable Trust assists financially distressed families who are further burdened by the expenses of having a child with cancer. These families often have no resources available to assist them with everyday living expenses and the Angel Charitable Trust aims to make these children and their families more comfortable during the period of active treatment. From assisting with household bills, to sending kids to camp, to purchasing computers for the kids to keep up with their homework and communicate with one another, the funds are desperately appreciated.

Having conquered the width of Long Island Sound, Fred naturally wanted to swim it length-wise. Sure it's over one hundred miles, but why stop there? Why not attempt to swim the entire coast of New England, from New York to Canada? Not all at once, mind you. Fred

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Fred Brooke is swimming the entire New England Coast to help kids who are battling cancer. Lynn McCarthy is navigating.

## Arizona LMSC BOARD MEMBERS

### CHAIRMAN

Katy James  
[katyjameswims@hotmail.com](mailto:katyjameswims@hotmail.com)  
 480-897-6411

### VICE CHAIRMAN

Doug Adamavich  
[dpa\\_az@cox.net](mailto:dpa_az@cox.net)  
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### SECRETARY

Kathi Lindstrom  
[klmswim@cox.net](mailto:klmswim@cox.net)  
 602-923-1312

### REGISTRAR

R.A. "Mitch" Mitchell  
[rammedd@hotmail.com](mailto:rammedd@hotmail.com)

### TREASURER

Gregg Smith  
[gregglaptop@msn.com](mailto:gregglaptop@msn.com)  
 602-357-3448

### ARIZONA MOUNTAIN MASTERS

Erin Eastwood  
[e\\_swims@hotmail.com](mailto:e_swims@hotmail.com)

### FORD AQUATICS

Jim Stites  
[swim1@qwest.net](mailto:swim1@qwest.net)  
 520-529-9113

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Sam Perry  
[azperrys@hotmail.com](mailto:azperrys@hotmail.com)  
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[paulcate@earthlink.net](mailto:paulcate@earthlink.net)

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Simon Percy  
[sundevilmasters@cox.net](mailto:sundevilmasters@cox.net)

### AT LARGE

Dan Gruender  
[ediebg@aol.com](mailto:ediebg@aol.com)  
 480-946-5805

Eddie Gruender  
[ediebg@aol.com](mailto:ediebg@aol.com)  
 480-946-5805

Gordon Gillin  
[Swimgordon@aol.com](mailto:Swimgordon@aol.com)  
 520-825-8261

## Angel s in the Ocean, continued from page one

will admit he's no Lynn Cox. He's more like The Little Engine That Could. So he determined he would swim the New England coast one stroke at a time, over a period of 11 summers, potentially raising millions of dollars--a staggering commitment whichever way you look at it. The event was dubbed Angel Swim New England.

Angel Swim New England officially began in 2003 with Fred's 8-day, 103-mile solo swim from the New York/Connecticut border to the Connecticut/Rhode Island border. In 2004, the swim proceeded up the Rhode Island coast with a 50-mile swim over a five-day period. In 2005, Angel Swim New England proceeded from the Rhode Island/Massachusetts border to Boston, a distance of approx 80 miles over a 9-day period (see his diary excerpt about this swim on page 3).

In 2005 alone, Fred's swim, together with Angel Ride Connecticut and assorted other "Angel" fundraisers raised close to \$175,000. 100% of the money is dedicated to bringing happiness to young people battling cancer. Since the charity is 100% volunteer run, 100% of the funds raised go directly to help the kids.

So, every summer through 2013, with Lynn McCarthy kayaking faithfully alongside, Fred is scheduled to swim an average of 10 miles at a stretch in frigid New England bodies of water. Encountering waves that nauseate him, he thinks of the kids going through chemotherapy, and it gives him strength. Battling currents that send him backwards, he thinks of kids who have setbacks in their treatment, but who have the courage and faith to never give up. Feeding every 30 minutes through blistered, salt-puckered lips, he remembers the effects of radiation on the children, and how they simply persevere.

While Fred receives his inspiration from the children, he, in turn, inspires others not to give up, including swimmers across the U.S. who now ask themselves "how can I give my own passion a purpose?"

There are a lot of great causes in the world to support. There are just as many swimmers who are passionate about their sport. Fred Brooke has shown by example how we can stretch the limits of what's possible by marrying our passion with a purpose.

For specific questions and additional information about Angel Charitable Trust, contact:

Lynn McCarthy  
 Address: P.O. Box 1013  
 Old Lyme, CT 06371  
 Phone: 860-227-0658  
 Email: [lynn@angelcharitabletrust.org](mailto:lynn@angelcharitabletrust.org)



Andrew Alden, diagnosed with leukemia at age 4, temporarily lost his hair but not his dimples, nor his will to fight the cancer as his treatment continues. He is one of many children benefiting from the efforts of the all-volunteer Angel Charitable Trust.

## Out in the Open...Water, that is

In this column, swimmers are invited to share with **Swim Arizona** readers their open water experiences.

*The following passage from Fred Brooke's swimming diary is excerpted from [www.angelswimnewengland.com](http://www.angelswimnewengland.com).*

A week has past since our swim to Boston and it's now early morning on the coast of Maine. I'm sitting on a deserted island gazing out over the smooth, cold ocean reflecting on where the Swim, the Ride and Angel Charitable Trust led us this year. I'm reminded of all the wonderful people who pushed back their busy lives and reached inside themselves for children they've never met.....of the riders who contributed so much and who hopefully walked away with more....of the countless volunteers for whom "yes, we can" was the underlying theme....of the Hole in the Wall Camp that inspires us all to new heights.....and of course, of the children who carry their message of strength and perseverance.

I'd like to believe that our organization touched hundreds of people in the same special ways it touched me. That it represents a collective good that focuses its energy on others rather than on ourselves. That it reminds us of our fragile health while teaching us that hard fought battles can be won. That it rewards us with a glow of pride that tantalizes the soul into wanting more.

I look down at the water.....its pale emerald green pulling me in.....I recall the endless repetition of stroke after stroke; hour after hour and day after day....Angel Swim 2005. The swimming up Buzzards Bay with it's familiar landmarks and generous tides helping me toward the Cape Cod Canal.....the unwelcome 52 degree greeting from Massachusetts Bay on the other side.....the strong Northeast winds reminding Lynn and I that we progressed only at the whim of a higher power...the relief in catching sight of an escorting harbor master, fireman or Coast Guardsman volunteering his or her day off for some distant and unknown child....

Unlike years past, this year's swim from Rhode Island to Boston seemed neither tedious nor difficult. The hours passed quickly as I let my mind wander to far off places and left my well being to Lynn; always in her kayak; always by my side. I thought of the children and what it must be like to have one's fate so uncertain. I thought of their parents and of their unwavering façade of strength; only able to unmask their fear behind closed doors. I thought of my own adult children and whether I'd have the strength to help steer them to health should the occasion arise.

So while the dates and places have already started to fade, my memory of the people will be with me forever....the policeman from Dartmouth who swam alongside in solidarity of our cause.....the marina operators for whom no request was too much.....the harbor masters and Coast Guard Auxiliary that kept us safe at sea....and young Andrew and Robert for whom cancer is just a bump in the road.

Next year we'll continue our swim up the coast carrying a message for those who can't carry it themselves. I'll again let the clear green water take me to far off places while the rhythm of my breathing sets my mechanical pace.....stroke after stroke, child after child.

--Fred Brooke

Editor's note: "Young Andrew and Robert" whom Fred mentions above happen to be my nephews, without whom I may have never learned about the humbling endeavors of Fred Brooke. While most kindergartners are lucky to be fighting with their brothers, Andrew, at 5, is fighting a brave battle with leukemia. He is doing great so far, in large part thanks to the kind hearts and good work of Angel Charitable Trust.



Throughout the year, Arizona Masters participates in several major events. These events generally follow this schedule, dates and times vary, however. For an up-to-date listing of upcoming events, please visit the official website.

**January:** USMS One-Hour Postal (SCY)  
**February:** Polar Bear Meet (SCY)  
**March:** Sun Devil Invite (SCY)  
**April:** Short Course State Championship (SCY)  
**May:** USMS Short Course Nationals (SCY)  
**June:** Grand Canyon State Games (SCY)  
**July:** Long Course State Championship (LCM)  
**August:** USMS Long Course Nationals (LCM)  
**September:** La Jolla Open Water Swim (Open Water)  
**October:** Fall Classic (SCM)  
**December:** Southwest Zone Championship (SCM)

See entry forms in this newsletter or visit [www.arizonamasters.org](http://www.arizonamasters.org)

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## Arizona LMSC

### COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

TOP TEN Barry Roth  
[wbroth@earthlink.net](mailto:wbroth@earthlink.net) 520-296-4908

STATE RECORDS Monica Bailey

PHOENIX EQUIPMENT Katy James  
[katyjameswims@hotmail.com](mailto:katyjameswims@hotmail.com)  
480-897-6411

PHOENIX SAFETY Peggy Finch  
480-496-9157

LONG DISTANCE/NEWSLETTER  
June Hussey [junehussey@msn.com](mailto:junehussey@msn.com)  
520-577-0032

WEBMASTER Mike Carey  
[mike@carbboom.com](mailto:mike@carbboom.com)

PARLIAMENTARIAN Gordon Gillin  
[Swimgordon@aol.com](mailto:Swimgordon@aol.com) 520-825-8261

OFFICIALS REPRESENTATIVE Judy  
Gillies [jgillies@mindspring.com](mailto:jgillies@mindspring.com) 520-622-4129

USMS COACHES REPRESENTATIVE  
Jim Stites [swim1@qwest.net](mailto:swim1@qwest.net)  
520-529-9113

HISTORIAN Edie Gruender [ediebg@aol.com](mailto:ediebg@aol.com)  
480-946-5805

ASSISTANT HISTORIAN Helen Bayly  
[hbbb@verizon.net](mailto:hbbb@verizon.net)

SANCTIONS Laura Winslow  
[winslowl6@yahoo.com](mailto:winslowl6@yahoo.com)

SENIOR OLYMPICS Dan Gruender  
[ediebg@aol.com](mailto:ediebg@aol.com) 480-946-5805

### HOSPITALITY

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIRMAN  
Sam Perry [azperrys@hotmail.com](mailto:azperrys@hotmail.com) 480-941-0232

### PAST CHAIRPERSONS

Edie Gruender [ediebg@cox.net](mailto:ediebg@cox.net)  
Judy Gillies [jgillies@mindspring.com](mailto:jgillies@mindspring.com)  
Jack Salvatore  
Helen Bayly [hbbb@verizon.net](mailto:hbbb@verizon.net)