

Local teacher praised for commitment to swimming

An ambitious 18-year-old is making a splash as an inspirational swimming teacher despite having to give up his dreams of being a professional athlete.

Regardless of having to give up competitive swimming due to the diagnosis of an atrial septal defect – a hole in the heart – Nathan McKechnie from Cambuslang is continuing his passion for the sport by sharing his knowledge with others as a qualified Learn to Swim teacher.

Nathan also has autism and is partially sighted, none of which has stopped him from playing his part in helping to create 'Generation Swim' – a generation of safe, competent swimmers.

Hidden disabilities, which are not always visible like autism, can make life challenging, but through swimming Nathan has found his vocation in life where he can make a difference to the lives of others.

Nathan discovered his talents in the pool at the age of eight and swam with the City of Glasgow Seals Swimming Club at 14 as well as with City of Glasgow Swim Team and was on the road to compete in the 2020 Special Olympics before it was postponed due to covid.

The teenager has now moved onto his next chapter and hopes to inspire others through delivering Learn to Swim lessons to children across all abilities which are vital to help gain

confidence and competence in the water through the Learn to Swim National Framework.

Nathan said: “I love being able to see children grow from week to week and I am always really proud of that progression. Swimming makes me feel like myself and that I don’t have to pretend to be like everyone else and I love being able to pass this onto others.

“It’s not been easy but it’s rewarding to spend so much time poolside and to be so involved in a sport I love.

“My advice for anyone is that it doesn’t matter what cards you are dealt, you should keep going and make the most of any opportunity as it can turn into something really good.”

Nathan studies Sports Coaching and Development at South Lanarkshire College and teaches swimming five days a week at South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture who have supported him through his training. Nathan hopes to follow a career pathway centred around swimming.

The Learn to Swim National Framework – a partnership between Scottish Swimming and Scottish Water which is delivered by 38 aquatic providers across Scotland in more than 160 pools – is shining a light on the inspiring teachers involved in teaching the next generation of youngsters to swim.

Organisers have launched a nationwide drive to recruit a new network of poolside teachers, promising huge job satisfaction as they help children of all ages and abilities to become safer and competent swimmers.

The programme is open to everyone regardless of disability or skill level, with the partnership committed to creating a supportive environment for all to learn and teach swimming.

Euan Lowe, CEO of Scottish Swimming said: “Nathan embodies the spirit and passion we aim to ignite in all of our Learn to

Swim teachers. Despite personal setbacks that could have easily made him give up, he has committed himself to empowering children with a life-saving skill.

“When you have such passionate teachers, this directly translates into lessons and makes for a very enjoyable experience for kids, teachers and parents.

“We’re extremely proud to have instructors like Nathan who devote themselves to building people’s ability in the water. All in all, Nathan and our other great teachers, are creating a safer Scotland.”

Brian Lironi, Director of Corporate Affairs with Scottish Water, said: “Nathan exemplifies the values of Learn to Swim in helping to build inclusive, welcoming environments where every child can thrive, get active and learn a vital life skill.

“Nathan – and all the other swim teachers across Scotland, are a testament to the passion for developing the next generation of safe and competent swimmers – the enthusiastic, dedicated teachers delivering these lessons play such an important role in encouraging and supporting children of all ages and abilities to learn and enjoy swimming in a safe way.”

The National Learn to Swim Framework has already provided lessons to more than 100,000 youngsters and aims to reach another 100,000 by 2025.

Individuals looking to become a teacher will be put through the Scottish Swimming Teacher Qualification (SSTQ) – the industry standard for those who wish to teach unsupervised to groups of swimmers with a range of abilities and is essential for seeking employment as a swimming teacher.

The Learn to Swim Framework helps to create quality Learn to Swim environments for children from birth upwards where they can learn the vital skills to become safe and competent

swimmers, and get to experience the wider health and social benefits that swimming can offer as they progress through the aquatic pathway.

Scottish Swimming support National Framework partners to develop their teachers with regular continued professional development and access to resources to help with their lesson delivery.

Learn to Swim aims to build a legacy for Scotland – creating “Generation Swim” by improving water safety and giving all children a platform to achieve their full potential both in the pool and out.

<https://scottishswimming.com/events/events-calendar/qualifications>



Nathan McKechnie