

Sherwood YMCA swimmer sets world record in Rio

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The YMCA is known for building strong kids, strong families and strong communities. Here in Sherwood, we enjoy a special relationship with our community. Because of the strong support we have from this community we are able to turn around and offer programs that allow our members to do great things.

One program that stands out is the YAWAMA Swim Team. Over the years the swim team has produced swimmers who have competed on regional, national and even international levels. The program has partnered with the high school to produce State Champions and now for a second time a Paralympian. Alice Luo came to the Sherwood YMCA in April of 2008 to train for the Beijing Summer Paralympics.

Paralympic swimming competition is open to male and female athletes with physical disabilities such

as dwarfism, amputation/limb loss, blindness/visual impairment, spinal cord injury/wheelchair-users, cerebral palsy/brain injury/stroke and Les autres.

Swimming for men and women has been a part of the Paralympic program since the first Games in 1960 in Rome, Italy. Today, the races are highly competitive and among the largest and most popular events in the Paralympic Games.

Paralympic swimming competitions occur in 50-meter pools and, while competing, no prostheses or assistive devices may be worn.

After a spinal chord injury in 2002, which left Alice dependent on a wheelchair, she was depressed. The world as she knew it had changed and would never be the same. She found the swimming pool two years later and made the discovery that she had talent. She had a talent for swimming that was going to take her places she'd never dreamed of and by 2008 she was headed for the



RENEE BROUSE

YMCA Corner

Paralympics in Beijing.

YAWAMA Head swim coach, Mark Maxwell, serves as an assistant coach with the Paralympics and coached former Teen Center Director, Aaron Paulson for several years. Alice knew of Coach Maxwell and asked to train with him in our Sherwood Pool. After Beijing, Alice took about six months off before coming back to the pool to swim with our YAWAMA kids. Last month in early December, Alice made the trip to Rio de Janeiro to compete in the IPC World Championships for

her home country of Taiwan. It was there that she set a new world record in the 200 IM (Individual Medley) event wearing her YAWAMA swim cap under her country cap. She made us all proud that day.

Alice works in the pool eight times a week, the weight room with personal trainer Katie Grimes three days a week and dry land workouts with the swim team three days a week. She works hard at this and feels like she has accomplished something. She's no longer depressed and loves to work with the kids on the swim team. She has nothing but good things to say about those kids and the program she's aligned herself with. I think she's inspiring.

It's programs like this and participants like Alice that make our Y such a great place. Look at what she has accomplished in a three lane pool. Alice's story is just one of many I could tell you about. It's all possible because of the support this

community gives this Y. Every year we embark upon the Strong Communities Campaign to raise money for the Teen Center, our YSNAPS participants, the swim team and those in need of financial assistance.

This year we have a goal of \$51,000. Will you help us reach that goal? Will you help us provide opportunities for people who want to accomplish great things like Alice? She has shown us that great things can happen in ordinary places and Sherwood is one of those places. I'd like you to be a part of that opportunity too. Our campaign kicked off on Feb. 1 and will run the month of February. To be a part of the Strong Communities Campaign and contribute you need to simply call or come in. We'll help you become a part of the great things that are happening at the Sherwood Regional Family YMCA. You are what you do, what do you want to do?