

More than 950 Swimmers to Fight Cancer at 17th Annual Swim Across America - Rhode Island Open Water Swim on Sept. 12

Nation's Largest Swim Across America Event Honors Retired Providence College Coach John O'Neill; Proceeds Support Cancer Research at Women & Infants Hospital

NARRAGANSETT, RI, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Swim Across America, the national nonprofit that makes waves to fight cancer through charity swims across the U.S., will host the 17th annual [Swim Across America - Rhode Island](#) Open Water Swim on Saturday, Sept. 12, at Roger Wheeler State Beach, in Narragansett, Rhode Island. The event offers quarter-mile, half-mile and 1-mile swims, plus a fun Kids Splash & Dash. Swimmer registration is at capacity with more than 950 swimmers registered. Volunteers are still needed and donations and virtual participation through SAA My Way remain open. Proceeds support cancer research at Women & Infants



Olympic swimmers Elizabeth Beisel (left) and Janel McArdle (right) with Coach John O'Neill at a previous Swim Across America - Rhode Island open water swim. Coach O'Neill is being honored at this year's Sept. 12 open water swim.

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Coach John O'Neill

Hospital of Rhode Island. To volunteer, donate or participate virtually, visit swimacrossamerica.org/rhodeisland.

This year's swim will honor event co-founder John O'Neill, who retired after 36 seasons leading Providence College Swimming & Diving.

O'Neill co-founded the swim in 2010 and has served on its event committee since. He recruited college teams throughout New England and made the cause part of Providence College Swimming & Diving's culture, raising more than \$550,000 for the event.

“Coach O’Neill has been the heart of Swim Across America Rhode Island since its inception,” said Douglas Sayles, event director of Swim Across America - Rhode Island. “He introduced generations of Providence College swimmers to this cause and brought New England coaches and swimming programs together around a shared purpose. Most of all, he has shown young athletes how they can use the sport they love to make a meaningful difference for families facing cancer. We’re grateful to John and glad this year’s swim can help celebrate his career.”



Retired Providence College Coach John O'Neill at last year's Swim Across America - Rhode Island Swim. Coach O'Neill is a co-founder of the annual swim that makes waves to fight cancer. He is being honored at this year's Sept. 12th annual open water swim,

“Too many family members and friends have been lost to cancer and we wanted to do something that could help,” said O’Neill.

His commitment deepened as he supported Providence College swimmers who faced cancer, including Colleen Lowell '97 and Kara McCurdy '22. McCurdy continued swimming after treatment and later joined O’Neill and the Friars at the Rhode Island swim.

A Providence College-hosted retirement reception honoring O’Neill will follow that evening. Tickets are \$40 at bit.ly/oneill-reception.

Established in 2010, Swim Across America - Rhode Island swim has raised more than \$3 million for Women & Infants’ Program in Women’s Oncology. As the largest Swim Across America event in the country, it also draws more than 20 collegiate swimming, diving and water polo teams.

About Swim Across America

Since 1987, Swim Across America has raised more than \$150 million for cancer research and helped fund clinical trials contributing to FDA-approved immunotherapies Keytruda, Opdivo, Yervoy and Tecentriq. With swims in 27 markets across the U.S., the organization supports more than 60 cancer research projects and has nine named Swim Across America labs that support advances in immunotherapy and gene editing. Learn more at swimacrossamerica.org.

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