

Berkley Hutchins, Connecticut River Stingrays

“What Swimming in the NHSA Has Meant to Me”

Sitting down to write this essay and trying to find the right words to describe what swimming in the NHSA has meant to me, is nearly impossible. This is because there are simply no words to express my gratitude and appreciation for the staff, swimmers, and coaches in the NHSA. When I began swimming at six years old, I had no idea what I was doing, I just knew I loved it. I went to my first meet and was so intimidated by the older kids, I was nervous to go up to the block for the first time. Little did I know that the older kids and coaches from all the teams around me would talk to me while I was up there, and get me excited before my races. The constant support and encouragement from the swimmers in the NHSA is incredible. Throughout the many years of swimming, through highs and lows, I have been able to form bonds with swimmers from all different teams. Even if they were my closest competitors, we formed friendships that I would not have had if it weren't for the NHSA. I have one memory that I will never forget, from when I was 9 years old. I was the only one from my team that had qualified for a meet, so I was sitting in a corner by myself with my coach when another team came over and sat with us. For the rest of the meet the kids on that team and I went up to the blocks to cheer each other on, and just had the best time. I am lucky enough to still be friends with those kids now. This shows just the kind of respect and family-like aspects that the NHSA provides for swimmers. Not only has swimming provided me with friendships, but swimming has also been an outlet for me during the harder times in life. When I swim it's just me and the water and my mind is able to take a break from everything going on around me. This is one of the reasons I have never stopped, and it is so important to me. Fortunately enough my parents have seen how swimming has helped me through rough times and because of that they make sure that no matter what is going on in their lives they work hard to make sure they can pay for my swim team. This has meant so much to me because the environment of swimming at practice, going to meets, and being a part of the NHSA has filled my life with dedication, hard work, and more importantly laughter and joy knowing I have a big family around, supporting me anywhere I am.