

# Memorial swim honors memory of Scott Kaplan

By Anne Forline

On May 14, friends and family of Scott Kaplan gathered at the Gloucester County Institute of Technology (GCIT) pool for the ninth annual Scott Kaplan Memorial Swim.

Scott was the only child of Steve and Rose Kaplan of Blackwood. He was a 2005 Gloucester Catholic graduate, a member of the National Honor Society and also an accomplished swimmer. Scott died suddenly a month after his high school graduation.

As a member of the Gloucester Catholic Swim Team, Scott swam all four years while at Gloucester Catholic. At the Tri-County Conference Swimming and Diving Showcase, Scott won the 200 meter freestyle event every year of his high school career.

Gloucester Catholic's swim coach, Kevin Nolan, recalled when Scott first competed in the event as a freshman. "Scott was actually the second seed, but he swam it that year and won it and he won it all four years."

When Scott first clinched that event, he started a 13-year winning streak for his alma mater that remains intact to this day.

The Scott Kaplan Memorial Swim is held each May at GCIT as a way to remember Scott and to celebrate his love for the sport in which he excelled.

The event is organized for swimmers, friends and family to "just have fun," Nolan said.

All proceeds from the swim event benefit the Scott Kaplan Memorial Scholarship Fund.

Quick, fun races are organized with some of the events pitting alumni against current GCHS swim team members.

"That's funny to watch because the alumni do not want to lose to the current members of the swim team," Nolan said with a laugh.

Scott's father, Steve, said the memorial swim is "bittersweet."

As he looked out at the Olympic-sized pool and saw and heard the camaraderie among the swimmers, he recalled how his son's interest in swimming was sparked from watching the Olympics on TV.

Scott was 9 years old when he told his father: "Hey Dad, I'd like to try that."

Steve replied to his son: "It's hard work and you'll have to swim a lot of laps."

Scott said, "I don't care. I'd still like to try."

Steve said his son swam on three teams: the Camden County YMCA, Barclay Farms and Gloucester Catholic.

He used to take Scott twice a year to Toms River to swim the "magic mile," which amounts to 66 laps in the pool.

Scott received acceptances at five colleges, but decided on Lehigh. He was set to major in physics.



Photo by Anne Forline

Rose and Steve Kaplan before the start of the annual Scott Kaplan Memorial Swim, which honors the memory of their son, an avid swimmer and a Gloucester Catholic graduate.

Friend, classmate and fellow swim team member, John Chew, brings his 8-year old son, Jack, every year. Jack has been coming "ever since he was in a stroller."

With tiny water droplets falling from his hair and rolling down his cheeks, Jack said he likes coming to the swim event because "I get to do cannonballs."

Rose said her son would be so proud seeing the turnout for the event.

"Scott always had a smile on his face and he always wanted to help. He loved Gloucester Catholic. He just loved it," she said.

She feels "blessed" that so many people came out to remember Scott and to support the event.

"We had such a nice turnout. Some of these kids don't even know Scott and they still came out. He is smiling down on us all seeing all the kids and their parents."

## With Pan Am Games, groups push to limit trafficking

By Michael Swan  
Catholic News Service

TORONTO — As Toronto gets set to host the Pan Am Games, rights campaigners are putting their best efforts into ensuring that the city does not

become a playground for human traffickers while the multi-sport, billion-dollar event takes place.

Led by Catholic religious sisters, a broad coalition is getting ready for the July 10-26 Pan Am Games and the Aug. 7-15 Parapan Am Games by

ramping up public education campaigns about human trafficking and the sex trade.

The Toronto Counter Human Trafficking Network, headquartered at the FCJ Hamilton House Refugee Project and backed by the Faithful Companions of Jesus, is working on a "unified response model" that includes a hotline that can link victims to police, social workers, shelters, health care and more, said Varka Kalaydzhieva, the project coordinator.

"Human sex trafficking goes with national and international sporting events," the Rev. Karen A. Hamilton, an Anglican and general secretary of the Canadian Council of Churches, warned in Ottawa earlier this year. "And it will be coming to my city, because Toronto is hosting the Pan Am Games this summer."

With athletes from 41 countries participating, the Pan Am Games will be the largest multi-sport event held on Canadian soil.

The most visible anti-trafficking campaign will likely be the GIFT Box,

a 10-foot-high structure at the Anglican Cathedral Church of St. James in downtown Toronto that will look like a present on the outside and tell the tale of enslavement and exploitation on the inside. The GIFT Box project, backed by the U.N. Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking, was launched during the 2012 Olympics in London.

The idea is to show people just how victims are caught up in human trafficking, Kalaydzhieva said.

"It signifies or symbolizes the way they lure you into trafficking. Once you go into the box, once you are tempted, you open the gift and go inside," she said. "There it explains to you how human trafficking happens, what are the signs, some stories of survivors and how they were taken into trafficking."

While the GIFT Box tries to reach a public that may never have considered the issues around human trafficking, the aim is also to alert potential victims or those who may know victims and provide help.

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