

May 7, 2025

Why the Osborn Aquatic Center Matters

The Osborn Aquatic Center serves a dynamic and vital purpose for the City of Corvallis. In addition to providing a space for swim team practice, swim lessons, aquatic exercise classes, therapy water classes, and outdoor recreation during the warm summer months, the Aquatic Center is an incredible venue for people of all ages to build community.

After taking a few water aerobics classes and lap swimming (which, for me, means putting on a pair of flippers and using a paddle board to go back and forth for at least 20 minutes in a lane), I joined as a member. What immediately struck me was the range of activities and how all levels of swimming, along with the diversity of ages and physical abilities, shared this common space. As an older person who was self-conscious about my body in a swimsuit, that shyness quickly dissipated because everyone was there to work on something, and no one cared. The focus is on using the facility, from learning how to swim to engaging in some type of water activity to improve one's health. The more I attended classes, particularly lap swimming at 6 am, the better I got to know people, both fellow swimmers and staff. Everyone is incredibly supportive. When I regularly attended an evening water aerobics class, I became friends with several of the other attendees. It was also fun to watch and hear the classes teaching babies how to swim. I loved hearing the cheering when the swim team practiced and encouraged one another.

One of the most significant times at the Osborn Aquatic Center occurred during the COVID shutdown. I was one of many people who worked from home for over a year during that period. Osborn found a way to resume classes, both indoors and outdoors safely. This saved my sanity and that of many others. We exercised and got to see people! The staff worked hard to keep those classes going and made the area safe by observing all the masking and distancing mandates in place.

I have enjoyed countless laughs and camaraderie at Osborn as we all are working to improve our health and working out in the water is one of the best ways to do this. The closure of the facility has been challenging for so many people and the swim team. It is a remarkable facility and one worth finding a way to raise money to repair. I am available to help in any way I can to advocate for the repair, help raise money, look for grants, etc.

The important contributions of Osborn to the community:

- 1 of 2 indoor facilities in the state with a long-course pool
- 1 of 2 indoor facilities in the state that can hold large competitions/ championships for swimming (for all ages from 5-100yrs, adaptive and reg competition), water polo, etc
- used by OSAA to hold high school district and state championships for multiple districts and 5A/4A/3A
- one of few facilities in the state that has accessibility for adaptive swimming
- teaches water safety skills and provides safe places for residents to cool off and recreate
- hosts 700 swim lessons/week
- events at Osborn bring in \$1.5M to the Corvallis community
- employs >100 hourly wage employees (important for high school & college students)
- warm pool which is good for therapy and keeping toddlers warm as they become water-comfortable/safe

Thank you for your time reading this letter.

Susan Emerson