



Prepared by: Swim Across America Fairfield County  
[swimacrossamerica.org/fairfieldcounty](http://swimacrossamerica.org/fairfieldcounty)

Contact: Jenifer Howard | 203-273-4246  
[jhoward@jhowardpr.com](mailto:jhoward@jhowardpr.com)

## Swim Across America Fairfield County Pivots Annual Open Water Swim to A Virtual Personal Challenge

*Participants Can Walk, Run, Swim, Bike, Workout, Volunteer to Raise \$\$\$ To Fight Cancer*

**STAMFORD**, Conn., June 15, 2020 — In recognition of these challenging times and the need to keep swimmers, volunteers, boaters and supporters safe due to COVID-19, **Swim Across America Fairfield County** has pivoted to a virtual fundraising event — a **Swim Across America Fairfield County Personal Challenge 2020**. While these times are filled with uncertainty, one thing remains true: groundbreaking cancer research still needs funding to save lives. That's where Swim Across America Fairfield County comes in to help #makewaves to #fightcancer by raising crucial funds to support its local Fairfield County beneficiary, the Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy (ACGT). Registration is only \$25 per person and can be made at [swimacrossamerica.org/fc](http://swimacrossamerica.org/fc).

The Swim Across America “Personal Challenge” can include walking, running, playing golf, kayaking, biking, dancing, climbing, volunteering, and of course, swimming. Any activity counts! Every age can participate — as an individual, team or family. The Swim Across America Fairfield County Personal Challenge 2020 event starts immediately and runs all summer. Each participant will receive a 2020 commemorative T-shirt, which will be available for pick-up later in the summer at a “socially-distanced” event. Progress of each participant’s Personal Challenge will be tracked and miles or hours logged online which will take participants “Coast to Coast” across the United States on a virtual map, showing how much progress is being made.

Every 15 minutes, 50 Americans are diagnosed with cancer. In 2020 alone, it is estimated that 1.8 million new cases of cancer will be diagnosed and there will be 606,520 cancer deaths in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> These staggering statistics offer compelling proof of the need to continue devising new approaches to treatment. Whether it is through swimming, volunteering, donating or cheering on loved ones, Swim Across America Fairfield County welcomes anyone and everyone who wants to be a part of the fight against cancer.

Established in 2008, the Swim Across America Fairfield County event has donated \$4.165 million in its 13 previous years for its local Fairfield County-based beneficiary, Alliance for Cancer Gene Therapy. One hundred percent of funds contributed by Swim Across America to ACGT go directly to crucial cancer gene therapy research. This year’s ACGT Swim Across America grant recipient is **Noriyuki Kasahara, MD, PhD**, at the Brain Tumor Center at the University of California San Francisco. Dr. Kasahara is conducting a clinical trial using virotherapy for brain cancer.

“I am extremely grateful to ACGT and Swim Across America for funding this next phase of our work,” says Dr. Kasahara. “At a time when federal funding has become scarce, it’s wonderful and inspiring to see organizations like ACGT and Swim Across America step up to support the potential of innovative science. Together, we will continue our fight to find better ways to help cancer patients.”

---

<sup>1</sup> [American Cancer Society](http://AmericanCancerSociety.org)

Event co-chair **Michele Graham**, is a parent of a young adult cancer survivor. Her daughter Nicole was diagnosed with leukemia in 2013 at the age of 16. After a relapse in 2018, she underwent a successful bone marrow transplant to treat the disease. “We all have a personal connection to cancer. We all know and love someone who will be impacted by it. Swim Across America Fairfield County is a way that everyone can join together to make a difference. It is more than a cause, it is a movement. Everyone can help make waves in the fight against cancer.”

**Nancy Carr**, co-chair of the open water event, has organized the team “Bonnie’s Buddies,” in honor of her friend Bonnie Bancroft of Old Greenwich, Connecticut, who lost her battle with pancreatic cancer in February of this year. “Bonnie embodied everything good and right in the world and made each of us want to be a better person,” noted Nancy. “In the words of some of her friends, Bonnie was ‘*class, elegance, sunshine, kindness and fun personified.*’ *We are all richer for having known her.*” In lieu of swimming, Nancy and her team have challenged themselves to walk 20 Fairfield County towns in Bonnie’s memory.

Swim Across America is a national organization and offers 21 open water swims from Boston Harbor to under the Golden Gate Bridge, and more than 100 pool swim fundraisers across the country. Its roots are firmly anchored in Connecticut and along the shores of Long Island Sound, with Darien, Connecticut, resident **Matt Vossler** and his lifelong friend and college roommate **Jeff Keith**, who founded Swim Across America in 1987. Throughout its years, Swim Across America has raised more than \$85 million in the fight against cancer. More than 100 Olympians support Swim Across America, including Michael Phelps, Craig Beardsley, Donna De Varona (a Greenwich resident and honorary Fairfield County co-chair), Rowdy Gaines, Janel Jorgensen McArdle (who grew up in Ridgefield, Connecticut), Bobby Hackett, Ryan Lochte, Glenn Mills, Christina Teuscher (who participates in the Fairfield County event) and many more.

To learn more about Swim Across America Fairfield County and to register for the Swim Across America Personal Challenge 2020, visit [swimacrossamerica.org/fc](http://swimacrossamerica.org/fc).

### **About Swim Across America**

Swim Across America, Inc. (SAA) is dedicated to raising money and awareness for cancer research, prevention and treatment through swimming-related events. With the help of hundreds of volunteers nationwide and past and current Olympians, Swim Across America is helping find a cure for cancer through athleticism, community outreach and direct service. To learn more visit [swimacrossamerica.org/fairfieldcounty](http://swimacrossamerica.org/fairfieldcounty) or follow on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#) @SAAFairfieldCo or email [michele@swimacrossamerica.org](mailto:michele@swimacrossamerica.org) or [nancycarr@swimacrossamerica.org](mailto:nancycarr@swimacrossamerica.org).

###