

Good Morning and welcome to the third day of the YMCA National Swimming and Diving Championships. Today is "Thumbs Up Thursday" according to our Gate Guys.

Like each one of the devotion leaders before me, and on behalf of all of the competitors here, I want to express our gratitude to our parents, coaches and teammates. Without them, we would not be here. We thank them for the hours spent driving, feeding, coaching, cheering, and consoling us. We thank them for the small fortune spent in fundraising. We thank them for the small fortune spent in training fees, travel, equipment, extra lessons, and fundraising. We thank them for their wisdom, confidence, strength, support, and love.

We often forget to thank the people in our lives for the example they set for us. All of us here have been influence by different kinds of role models. Most of us look to our parents, coaches and fellow YMCA athletes for positive examples of leadership, community service, healthy lifestyles, and moral values. As a result of my 6 years of Y National competition, I have learned that there is another important group of people who serve as role models for us, although most of us take them for granted. Without this special group of people, we would not be here today. They make this meet a reality for more than one thousand competitors each year. They are the YMCA National Volunteers. These volunteers are the timers, officials, registration workers, computer gurus, ID band checkers, announcers, and of course, the Gate Guys, along with an army of others who contribute to making this a positive experience for all.

These individuals exemplify the YMCA core values of honesty, caring, respect, and responsibility throughout the whole week and, without doubt, this is the way they live their lives throughout the year.

In my 6 years at Y Nationals, I have never met a YMCA Volunteer who was anything but eager and enthusiastic to serve in this role. They love the sport and love to see the swimmers grow

both in their athletic and personal development. The YMCA volunteers are genuine in their encouragement. They truly want each of us to do our best. Whether at 6 in the morning or late at night, in the pouring rain or the hot afternoon sun, the YMCA Volunteers are the positive sparks that which ignite a wonderful week. They really set the bar high as role models for all of us. From them we can learn the value of service above self and leadership with compassion; composure in the midst of chaos and optimism in the face of obstacles. By following their example, we can learn to be better members of our communities as well as citizens of the world. I hope that each one of us will take time to recognize the special impact that they have had on our experience here and thank them for their efforts.

Just as each one of us have our own role models, whether we realize it or not, we ourselves serve as role models to other people. YMCA National athletes have the opportunity and responsibility to be mentors to the other athletes on our teams, especially the younger swimmers. We're the big kids now and like it or not the younger swimmers will and do look up to us. Always remember that a role model isn't who you are when you think everyone is watching. It's who you are when you think nobody is watching.

Please join me in prayer: Heavenly Father, Help us to always be mindful of the influences of our actions, words, and deeds upon others and the power we have as role models to those around us. Guide us in the choices we make to enable us to be the kind of positive role models to others that these YMCA Volunteers have been to us. Help us to become people who are willing to serve others selflessly and to give freely of our time, talents, and resources. Amen.