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## Children must be 5 by June 1 to join

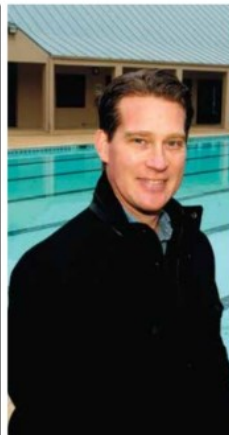
by LAKENDRA LEWIS

**W**inter weather isn't stopping the Knights Cross Crusaders swim team from gearing up for a warm, wet summer of friendly, spirited competition.

Crusaders' administrators, already preparing for the new season, will soon send reminders to families regarding enrollment taking place this spring. The team practices at the Stone Oak Community of Mutual Amenities, or SOCOMA, recreational facility at 1000 Knights Cross Drive.

"We'll open up registration to returning swimmers and their siblings first and then branch out to other families, and start practicing before the end of school lets out so that it's a smooth transition into summer," said David Doderer, a team representative. Up to 100 youngsters aged 5 to 18

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David Doderer, a representative for the Knights Cross Crusaders swim team, is reminding families that sign-ups are just around the corner, during the warmer days of spring. Photo by Leland A. Outz

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will comprise the team, which takes part in a series of meets put on by the Lone Star Summer Swim League.

The league is a South Texas program that provides youth an opportunity to competitively swim while learning about sportsmanship and camaraderie.

"To see the little kids just barely making it across the pool at first, and then they get across — that excitement they have that 'Wow, I'm getting this!' — That's the highlight," said Stone Oak resident Kristin Carey, the squad's volunteer coordinator. "You see how much week after week the kids improve, and how much stronger and competent they get. How they encourage each other at practice. It's just something amazing to see, and at the end of the year to see how much they've improved is inspiring."

The Crusaders will compete in four meets culminating in a championship typically held in June. Afternoon practices begin the second week in May, then switch to mornings when school is over to afford young swimmers a chance to hone their skills.

According to the rules, children under 5 years old by June 1 are ineligible. Doderer said another requirement is participants must be able to swim the length of the pool, 25 meters (a little more than 82 feet),

without touching the wall or the bottom. Doderer said joining the team is not the equivalent of swim lessons, "but for someone familiar with the water who wants to start to use their stroke to get across the water."

Doderer, who has three children competing for the Crusaders, said, "Being able to swim for safety reasons is so important. It's a lifelong treasure to be able to swim well."

Registration cost for family members in the SOCOMA homeowners association is \$70 for the first swimmer, and \$50 for each additional child. Those living elsewhere must pay \$125 and \$100, respectively, and membership only entitles families to use the pool during swim-team activities. In all cases, there's a \$15 discount for swimmers older than 14.

Returning participants and their families may update information online starting March 25, but must pay their registration and merchandise fees in person at the pool on March 28. Enrollment for new families will be poolside on April 4. The registration deadline is April 16, with a \$20 late fee afterwards, if a maximum 100 swimmers hasn't been reached.

"That number accommodates the size of the pool, and the more swimmers

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