

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very happy and healthy new year. As we begin a new year, many of us set goals to achieve during the year, and it's crucial that USA Synchro do the same. As the new year began, I asked myself, how can we move synchronized swimming ahead this year in terms of growth, leadership, finances, performance and professionalism. We want to keep the fire burning bright for the sport and I believe we can with some guidelines and direction. As we have just passed the 12th day of Christmas, I have 12 suggestions for candles of excellence for USA Synchro in 2010.

The Presidents 12 Candles of Excellence

1. Talk solutions not problems! How can we make things better and move ahead?
2. "Evangelize" synchronized swimming by telling five new people a day about our great sport and its benefits.
3. Find people doing something well and tell them about it. Praise their success!
4. Focus on what you want to make happen and not how things affect you.
5. Synchronized swimming is the "sport for the next generation of women" so act professionally, talk professionally, dress professionally and be this image to the rest of the world. What is the image that you project to others about the sport of synchro?
6. When talking to people, make them feel as if they are the most important person in the world, no matter what the skill level or status.
7. See situations as an opportunity to help and not criticize...just help when it is needed whether you "are supposed to" or not.
8. All things that are built solidly are built from the ground up...grass roots, grass roots, grass roots!
9. Be thankful for what we have been given through synchro – friendships, fun, experiences, fitness, challenges, etc.
10. Help others look good and succeed at what they are doing.
11. Remember the law of cause and effect. Work the cause not the effect.
12. We are here for the sport and all of our athletes - beginner to masters - and not for ourselves individually.

Let the theme of the candles be your guiding light as you approach synchro everyday! Apply the 12 candles one of these ways: focus on one a month; one a week for 12 weeks and repeat 4 times throughout the year; or one a day for 12 days and then repeat. Use these suggestions for leadership, coaching, judges, and for swimmers. We all want the same thing for the sport - to grow and be the best sport in the world. Let's work together to make this happen and have everyone who is part of the family feel like they are part of a family.

Keep your eye on the prize (growth and the people), organize, prioritize and strategize. What we will discover is a new-found energy for growth and success. Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing all of you throughout the year.

Duke Zilinski