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NEWS RELEASE

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Boys & Girls Clubs of San Dieguito's Coach Gracie Van der Byl Wins Marathon Swim Around Manhattan

Solana Beach, Calif. (June 17, 2014) – The Boys & Girls Clubs of San Dieguito's Coach Grace Van der Byl of the Rancho San Dieguito Swim Team, won the 31st annual Manhattan Island Marathon Swim this past weekend.

Grace completed the 28.5-mile counterclockwise course in 7 hours 14 minutes 3 seconds. The first male finisher was Samir Barei, in 7:17:59.

"Gracie is such an amazing individual," said Joe Benjamin, Pardee Aquatics Director at the Boys & Girls Clubs of San Dieguito. "Her mental toughness, work ethic and willingness to prepare for such extreme endeavors is truly amazing and such an inspiration to all of our young swimmers and masters swimmers alike."

The NYC Swim organized event is the longest annual swim race in the world. The race began and finished at the South Cove in Battery Park City, New York.

Van der Byl is a world-class open water swimmer and National level pool swimmer from Solana Beach, California. She also is the record holder for the Catalina Channel solo crossing from Catalina Island to the California mainland in 7 hours 27 minutes. She is also an active observer for the Catalina Channel Swimming Federation and was one of only two individuals (besides Rondi Davies) to finish all seven stage swims of the 2012 8 Bridges Hudson River Swim, the longest competitive open water swim in the world. She also won the first 9.5-mile stage swim in Saguaro Lake, the second 9-mile stage swim in Canyon Lake, the third 17-mile stage swim in Apache Lake, and the fourth 10 km night race in Roosevelt Lake at the 2013 S.C.A.R. Swim Challenge in Arizona. She also won the 15.1-mile (24.3 km) inaugural Cape Circumnavigation Challenge around Cape May, New Jersey in 2013.

Grace started swimming at age two for the Green Gate Gators Swim Team in Spring, Texas. She started year-round swimming at age seven for the Hub Fins Swim Team in Hattiesburg Mississippi. Later she represented The Woodlands Swim Team (TWST) and University of Houston at a National level.

After retiring, she coached for several teams in the Houston, Texas area. Upon moving to California, she became involved in the local swimming community and presently coaches for Rancho San Dieguito (RSD) swim team in Solana Beach at the Boys & Girls Clubs of San Dieguito. She currently swims for Solana Beach Swim Masters under Coach Joe Benjamin and supports a variety of open water swim-related causes and programs including the Catalina Channel Swimming Federation. She is a true ambassador for the sport of swimming with several local and national television appearances and enjoys investing in kids to develop the sport of open water swimming for a new generation.

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After retiring from swimming for about 10 years, Grace became involved with open water swimming and returned to master's pool swimming receiving five Gold Medals in Atlanta 2010. Grace has been competing in open water races since 2008 and increasingly became involved in the community through charity events like the Challenged Athletes Foundation, the NBC sponsored Iron Man program for cancer survivors, and the Mates-Helping-Mates event for victims of the Australian wild fires.

She also dedicates her time to grass-roots program development and introduced an age-group program for kids to compete in an all-season open water swimming championship. Her dedication to the sport earned her the coach of the year award in San Diego, and she continues to give back to the sport that gives so much to her.

She is married to renowned ocean kayaker and escort crew member Neil Van der Byl and co-manages the SoCal Open-Water Swim Support service.

About Boys & Girls Clubs of San Dieguito

The Boys & Girls Clubs of San Dieguito, founded in 1966, is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing positive activities to develop the education, health, self-esteem and character of youth. Today, the organization is one of the most successful Clubs in the country serving more than 20,000 youth in the San Dieguito community to include Carmel Valley, Del Mar, Encinitas, Solana Beach and Eden Gardens. Our various branches offer exceptional programs for youth to include:

- Personal development through six Core Program Areas
- Clean facilities with dedicated, caring staff members who provide a safe environment for youth
- Quality after-school programs and activities at affordable prices
- Diverse summer camps to fit the needs of all campers
- Innovative specialty programs in academics, music and arts, athletics, and healthy living

For more information on Boys & Girls Clubs of San Dieguito, please visit us at BGCSanDieguito.org

About Pardee Aquatics Center

The Doug & Marianne Pardee Aquatics Center is the gem of aquatics in North County. Located in Solana Beach, the Pardee Aquatics Center features two pools, spacious locker rooms, indoor and poolside showers, fitness center, snack bar and other aquatic amenities. Open to the public seven days a week, the Pardee Aquatics Center offers the nationally-recognized Rancho San Dieguito Swim Team, Solana Beach Swim Masters, water polo, lap swim, recreational swim, and swim lessons.

About Rancho San Dieguito Swim Team

The Rancho San Dieguito Swimming Team offers high quality, year-round competitive swimming with a dedicated and professional coaching staff. We emphasize stroke technique, training, and instruction for young athletes of all abilities. Our athletes range from beginning 6 year olds through college aged swimmers. The RSD Swim Team has over a 20 year history of successfully serving our community by developing outstanding competitive swimmers. Our great reputation is built upon the hard work of our coaches, athletes, parents, and volunteers. We strive to promote the health and self esteem of our members through the pursuit of excellence in swimming.

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