

BRUCKNER CHASE

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"Find your passion and push yourself. You'll never know what you are capable of until you try. I want others to consider the incredible potential that exists in all of us."

When they moved to Ocean City in 2007, the Chases started the Ocean City Swim Club. The first month the website had about 300 hits, but so far this June it has notched thousands. They host a swim in Longport every Sunday morning at 8 a.m. throughout the summer, but online they offer suggested workouts, support and advice.

"We want to pull people together, share our passion," said Chase. "I would run into all these people, lifeguards, distance swimmers, people who love ocean swimming, but there was no organization, just a lot of people who love marathon swimming."

"We started the Ocean City Swim Club to bring people to the waters we have come to love in South Jersey. Our passion for the water has taken us from England to Alaska and many bodies of water in between. Through swimming, surfing and paddling we want to create opportunities for others to challenge themselves in a positive environment in which they feel comfortable. Whether you are training for a triathlon, learning to do a flip turn or attempting the English Channel we have a place for you."

Chase said he tries to convince people that swimming in cold water is fun.

"A lot of people leave the ocean and go to the pool in September when the water starts to cool off. It's not necessary," he said. "You don't have to leave it behind. We have such a unique environment with the ocean and the back bays. It's beautiful, all around us. We tend to bring a lot of scary stuff with us from the beach. We're trying to create a safe environment for people."

Chase is a swim instructor for the Longport and Upper Township beach patrols and the adult fitness swimming program director for Ocean City's Aquatic and Fitness Center. He is also the ocean sports editor for Liberty Sports Magazine. He is the vice president of operations for Bikestation, a based out of Long Beach, Calif. The company builds transportation facilities that marry bike commuting to existing mass transit systems throughout the world.

"I commute. I live in Ocean City and I go back to California about every five weeks for a week," said Chase.

Chase grew up in Tennessee and competed in swimming events throughout his athletic career. He was a star in the pool at Houston's Rice University. He began competing in triathlons in 1984, finishing his first Ironman in 1985. He came back to swimming after hobbling around on land as he recovered from a 100-mile run.

He completed numerous marathon swims, including the 8.3-mile Pennock Island Challenge in Alaska, the 12-mile Trans Tahoe swim, a 22.5-mile length of Lake Tahoe Swim, the 10-mile Maui Channel, the 10K Santa Cruz Pier to Pier, the 22.5-mile Absecon Island swim, the first ever 19.6-mile swim around Ocean City and the 23-mile Lake George Marathon.

His life took a new turn when he met Michelle in Santa Cruz.

"Her family is out here, she grew up in South Jersey so I followed her back here," said Chase. "It's really neat. She grew up in a swimming family. Her late father swam from the Farallon Islands to San Francisco in 1967 when he was 43 years old. It's incredibly rough, there is Great White research base there for a reason. It's incredibly treacherous so she really understands what I do. It's what she grew up with. Her family is behind me and very supportive. There's a real connection."

"I think when I do these swims it's much harder on Michelle and the crew in the boat than it is on me. She watches me for hours on end, the crew is very supportive. Marathon swimming is not something that you do alone. There is a bond with your crew, you trust them implicitly."

On June 25 at 6 a.m., Chase will be leaving from the Upper Township lifeguard headquarters to swim 17 miles around the island. It will be one of many training sessions in preparation for the Santa Cruz challenge.

"In every training venue the goal is to raise an appreciation and awareness of the impact our activities have on the waters around us while introducing the positive impact those same waters can have on our lives," said Chase.

For more information, log on to www.brucknerchase.com or www.oceancityswimclub.org.