



In Memoriam: Roy Fielding

By: Connie Harvey, director of Aquatics Centennial Initiatives and Peter G. Wernicki, MD, FAAOS, member of the American Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council and chair of its Aquatics Sub-Council.

Our friend and colleague, Roy Fielding, passed away unexpectedly on Friday, May 15. Roy, a 50-year volunteer of the American Red Cross, had been a member of the Aquatics Sub-Council of the Scientific Advisory Council since 2006.

His contributions to Training Services, aquatics safety and the field of lifeguarding were significant and many. As a recognized leader in the field of aquatics management, lifeguarding operations, instruction and water quality, Roy was selected to be an advisor to the Red Cross on its Lifeguarding program first in the late 90s and has had a vital role in every iteration of this program ever since. He created the Lifeguarding Rescue Report which tracked incidents at aquatic facilities that influenced our training. He represented the Red Cross on many committees to establish safety standards for aquatics facilities, including the development of the United States Lifeguard Standards Coalition and the national Model Aquatic Health Code. Roy served as a Red Cross spokesperson at national and international conferences and for numerous media interviews.

Roy, known as “The Pool Professor” recently retired after a 44-year career from the University of North Carolina–Charlotte. In March, we were set to celebrate the renaming of the UNC Charlotte’s Belk Gym Pool to “The Roy R. Fielding Aquatic Center.” The dedication was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rest assured that we will be there to celebrate this honor when conditions allow.

Roy had received the Red Cross Chairman’s Award and Special Citation for Exceptional Volunteer Service. He’s been recognized by Aquatics International in its Power 25 as one of the most influential individuals in aquatics in the US in 2010. He was named as the Atlantic Swim Conference Men’s and Women’s Coach of the Year in 1990 and the Southern States Women’s Coach of the Year in 1992. Roy is a member of the University of Northern Iowa Athletic Hall of Fame for Swimming and the School of Health, Physical Education and Leisure Services Hall of Excellence.

Water safety was in Roy’s DNA. On the day of his passing, International Water Safety Day, he participated in a virtual proclamation ceremony with the mayor of Cedar Falls, Iowa naming May 16, 2020 as Jen Fielding Learn to Swim Day. Jen, Roy’s mother, taught swimming lessons for 50 years in Cedar Falls, until she was 95 years old.

Roy adored his wife, Mary Gaye, and loved all things aquatics (but especially scuba diving), his beloved UNCC 49ers and their cabin in the mountains of North Carolina.

Our hearts break for the loss of Roy and we send our love to Mary Gaye. We celebrate his life and are committed to ensuring that his legacy lives on in our work to make aquatics facilities safer for all. We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with Roy over the years, and to have the honor of calling him friend. Rest well our master of revelry, esteemed colleague and gentleman professor.

Roy and Mary Gaye recently established a scholarship fund to support future generations of UNC Charlotte student athletes and students involved in student athletics. Contributions can be made at <https://crowdfund.uncc.edu/project/21190>. The tribute to Roy at www.thepoolprofessor.com exemplifies his love of life and the love of his family, friends and colleagues.