



Photo Features:  
The DC  
Synchromasters



## USA ARTISTIC SWIMMING MASTERS

Summer  
2026



## Masters Survey

A Masters survey was sent on June 17 to all adult members of USAAS to better understand your needs and desires as a Masters swimmer. We hope that each of you respond. We are very pleased with the number of results we have received so far. The USAAS Masters Committee will provide a summary of the results later in the year and use your feedback to plan for future changes and initiatives for USAAS Masters. If you have not yet completed the survey, please do so at [this link](#).

## Top News

- Masters Athlete Survey
- Pan Am Masters
- Masters Nationals 2026
- DC Synchro Takes Canada
- Arizona Aqua Stars Team Retreat



Congratulations to all US  
teams representing at  
Canadian Masters!

01/06



## PANAM Aquatics Masters

On behalf of the PAQ Masters Committee, we are sharing this important [summons update](#) for the PanAm Aquatics Masters Championships Buenos Aires October 19-29, 2026. The current [AQUA \(World Aquatics\) Rules](#) apply, with the exceptions established in the PAQ General Rules for Masters Artistic Swimming. In addition, a free in-person Artistic Swimming clinic supported by World Aquatics will be offered during the Championships at Olympic Park. This clinic, [Understanding the Latest Changes to the Artistic Swimming Rules](#) will be presented on October 24 by Gabriela Viglino. All clinics will be open to coaches, athletes, and members of the Aquatics community, with limited spots available on a first come, first served basis. Registration for the PanAm Aquatics Masters Championships Buenos Aires 2026 is now open. Athletes and clubs may complete their registration through the official event site at this [registration link](#).

## USAAS Masters Nationals 2026

Mark your calendars! The 2026 USA Artistic Swimming Masters Championship will be held October 22–25, 2026, at the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. The annual championship brings together Masters athletes from across the country to celebrate competition, camaraderie, and artistic swimming as a sport for life. Charlotte offers a vibrant downtown atmosphere with restaurants, entertainment, and attractions all within walking distance of the competition venue. Athletes are encouraged to book accommodations early, as hotel blocks and preferred rates may fill quickly.

For event details, updates, registration information, and hotel booking links, visit:

- [2026 USA Artistic Swimming Masters Championship Information](#)
- [USAAS Masters Championships 2026 Hotel Booking](#)
- [USA Artistic Swimming Event Calendar](#)

Whether you're aiming for the podium, returning to competition after time away, or attending your first Masters Nationals, Charlotte promises to be an exciting destination for athletes, coaches, officials, and supporters alike. We look forward to seeing the Masters community come together this October!

## DC Synchro Takes Canada



The DC SynchroMasters traveled to Toronto, Canada, June 12-14, to compete in the Canadian Masters Artistic Swimming Championships. The team earned two gold medals and two silver medals while competing under the sport's new scoring system for the first time. As an added bonus, athletes got a glimpse of preparations for the World Aquatics World Cup Super Final, which was held at the same venue just days later. Beyond the competition, the event provided a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with friends from across the masters community, explore Toronto, and enjoy time together as a team. DC was joined by other US Masters teams which included Seattle Cascades Synchro, Indy Synchro, and the Chicago Sea Stars.

# Building Connections Beneath the Surface: Arizona Aqua Stars Team Retreat 2026

For Masters athletes seeking opportunities to grow beyond training and competition, options are surprisingly limited. While youth athletes often have access to camps, clinics, and leadership programs, comparable experiences for adult artistic swimmers are rare both nationally and internationally. As Masters athletes, we know successful teams are built on trust, communication, and connection. This January, the Arizona Aqua Stars kicked off the 2026 season by stepping out of the pool and into an unforgettable retreat designed to strengthen those bonds.



The Arizona Aqua Stars (AAS), one of the largest Masters Artistic Swimming programs in the US, now proudly supports more than 20 competitive athletes. With a passionate and supportive community, team members were eager to seek additional opportunities to develop athletically and personally while deepening relationships and supporting growth both in and out of the water. The retreat was the vision of three Arizona Aqua Stars leaders: Board President Dr. Sarah Barba, Head Coach Dr. Haleigh Slinker, and Board Secretary and longtime artistic swimming coach Jaime Burton. After attending USA Artistic Swimming Coaches College, as the only coach representing a program dedicated exclusively to Masters athletes, Slinker returned with a wealth of knowledge she was excited to share. Together, the trio developed a three-day experience that combined education, wellness, team building, personal reflection, and fun.

Participants received custom retreat workbooks, workshop materials, team swag, family-style meals, and a thoughtfully tailored agenda focused on athletic, artistic, and personal development. Set against the backdrop of northern Arizona's natural beauty and wildlife, the retreat brought together athletes from diverse backgrounds, age groups, and experience levels for a weekend of learning, laughter, and connection. The change of scenery created opportunities to strengthen and build relationships that extend far beyond pool time. The weekend featured team-building activities, goal-setting sessions, and meaningful discussions about the unique experiences of adult female



athletes. Participants explored topics such as body image, aging, balancing careers and family responsibilities, and the importance of carving out space for personal passions. Athletes reflected on both individual and team goals while examining how collaboration, commitment, and mutual support contribute to success. Artistic Swim specific content such as land drilling, artistic impression, choreography, and flexibility were balanced with workshop topics for personal development which included nutrition, visualization, and positive mental strategies. Team members also shared personal interests through short presentations on topics ranging from photography and knitting to local libraries and urban legends. A highlight of the weekend was a lighthearted vintage shopping challenge that had teammates styling one another for a night out in Lakeside, creating memories and laughter that will be talked about for years.

# Building Connections Beneath the Surface: Arizona Aqua Stars Team Retreat 2026

“Our goal was to create the type of experience we had always wanted as adult athletes and then gift that experience to our team,” said Barba. “I’ve had a lifelong love affair with synchro, so creating a retreat centered around the sport and the people who love it felt natural. When we hunt for an opportunity without finding it, at some point, we may just have to do it ourselves.” Barba, a Masters athlete since 2013, serves as Board President of Arizona Aqua Stars and as a USA Artistic Swimming Masters Committee Athlete Representative. Professionally, she has spent more than 25 years as an educator and administrator specializing in organizational leadership, project management, and professional development. Her doctoral research on performance psychology and self-efficacy provided a foundation for many of the retreat’s themes and activities.



Slinker contributed expertise in athlete health, nutrition, recovery, and performance. A pharmacist by profession and lifelong swimmer, she has competed and coached at both youth and Masters levels. Drawing from her Coaches College experience, she integrated current athlete development strategies into the retreat curriculum. “It was such a lovely opportunity to connect with my team without the pressures of practice, choreography, workouts, or competition,” Slinker shared. “I loved being able to sit, eat, chat, laugh, and simply be Haleigh. I was able to leave all of my other ‘hats’ and the worries and pressures that sometimes go with them behind. I especially appreciated that athletes could choose the level of participation that felt right for them. Having both a restful house and a festive house to choose from created the perfect balance.” Participants were encouraged to personalize their experience by choosing which workshops and activities to attend. Sessions covered sports psychology, performance mindset, nutrition, wellness, goal setting, and skill development, while social gatherings provided opportunities for deeper connection.

Burton brought decades of artistic swimming experience and creativity to the planning process. Having coached athletes to national-level competition, she helped design many of the memorable activities that made the weekend both meaningful and enjoyable. She shared, “Our team retreat was the perfect way to kick off the season. We were able to set expectations for the season and enjoy the company of the only other people we know who live this crazy life we call synchronized swimming! During the sessions we worked on everything from choreography to the mental game of an athlete. I don’t think we should ever start a season again without a retreat.”



The retreat also provided valuable opportunities for newer members to connect with veteran athletes, reinforcing the welcoming and inclusive culture that defines the Arizona Aqua Stars. After joining the team only one week earlier, Sydney Lucas shared “It gave me a good opportunity to meet all of my teammates before jumping into the pool with them. It was a great way to kick off the season with a chance to practice some technical and creative skills. It created so many sweet memories!” The retreat theme of “Many Stars. One Constellation” reinforced the AAS core values that whether training for Masters Nationals, returning to the sport after years away, or participating for fitness and friendship, every athlete plays an important role in the team’s success.

# Building Connections Beneath the Surface: Arizona Aqua Stars Team Retreat 2026

The success of the inaugural retreat has already sparked conversations about the future of Masters athlete development. The planning team believes similar experiences could be expanded to serve swimmers and teams throughout the United States and beyond. As Masters Artistic Swimming continues to grow, initiatives like the Arizona Aqua Stars Retreat demonstrate that athlete development extends far beyond technical skills. Building confidence, fostering meaningful friendships, supporting wellness, and creating opportunities for lifelong participation are equally important measures of success.

As the season progresses, the memories and connections formed during the retreat continue to serve as a reminder that artistic swimming is about more than routines and medals. It is about community, personal growth, and a shared passion for a sport that truly is for life. For the Arizona Aqua Stars, the retreat was more than a weekend getaway, it was the beginning of a vision for what Masters athlete experiences can become.

If your team is interested in hosting a similar event locally in your area, or considering a true retreat excursion in beautiful Arizona, the Arizona Aqua Stars would love to connect with you and help bring your vision to life. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Dr. Sarah Barba at [Dr.SarahEllen@outlook.com](mailto:Dr.SarahEllen@outlook.com) to discuss future similar opportunities for your team.



# Can my club host a local meet?



The answer is yes! But it takes working with your association to make it happen!

The Pacific Association in the bay area of California has a Masters classification in their local meets. At the local meets they generally do not use different age groups as the entries are small in number. So for example, all Solos compete in one group up to six solos being entered, and if there are more than that we go to like two separate age divisions. The swimmers can do either a tech routine or free routine, judged on the scoring system that we use in Nationals.

Should you have any questions about how this is done, check with Patricia Jones [mailforpj@aol.com](mailto:mailforpj@aol.com).

## USAAS Masters Committee Would Love to Hear from You!

If you would like for your Masters Team to be featured in future USAAS Masters Newsletters, please email 3-5 photos that highlight Masters Artistic Swimming as a "Sport for Life" to any Masters Committee Member to be considered. We also welcome your feature ideas and contributions. Thank you!

