

## Jay DeFinis – Great Lakes Zone Candidate for At-Large Director



The Election Committee has deemed that Jay DeFinis is a member in good standing of U.S. Masters Swimming. The candidate has indicated he is planning to attend the HOD Meeting for this election year and, if elected, is planning to attend all HOD Meetings during his tenure in office.

The candidate was nominated by *Daniel Cox* and received letters of recommendation from *Lisa Brown* and *Carrie Stolar* in accordance with the USMS Election Operating Guidelines.

The candidate provided the following responses on the Candidate Questionnaire/Consent-to-Run Form:

### Section Two: Candidate Qualifications

*I am a member in good standing of USMS in this election year:*        X   Yes    \_\_\_ No

*I am planning to attend the HOD Meeting for this election year:*        X   Yes    \_\_\_ No

*I am planning to attend all HOD Meetings during my tenure in office:*        X   Yes    \_\_\_ No

*I have attended 1 or more HOD Meeting in the past five years?*        X   Yes    \_\_\_ No

***Please list the USMS National HOD Meetings you have attended, including the dates of attendance:***

Jacksonville 2014, Kansas City 2015, Atlanta 2016, Dallas 2017, Jacksonville 2018, St Louis 2019, virtual 2020, 2021

### Section Three: Questions

***Why are you interested in this position and why do you believe you would be a good candidate?***

I represent the novice swimmer who has steadily improved and enjoyed the benefits of regular swimming. Beginning as a fitness swimmer, I joined USMS in 1985 to become fit and train for Triathlons. In 1991, I competed in Ironman Canada, and swam a 9 mile Lake Erie open water swim. After a long absence of swimming, I rejoined OHIO Masters in 2009. Through OHIO Masters swim meets, socials, and open water swims in Lake Erie, I learned about volunteer opportunities for USMS. I decided to serve at the LMSC level as both Lake Erie Secretary and Chair. We have grown our local board with representation across all levels of swimmers in our local communities. In 2014, I had the opportunity to attend USMS convention and see how the national USMS organization works. My first committee assignment was on the Investment Committee. This experience helped me understand the financial and operational side of USMS. From my professional years of board involvement and my passion for helping others learn to swim, I was asked to serve on the Swimming Saves Lives Foundation Board. I have been working with the ALTS and SSLF initiatives and fundraising. The incredible stories and dedication of our members and instructors have motivated me to do more. In 2020 I was chosen to represent USMS on the USA swimming foundation board. The unique experience and partnership opportunity for USMS has given me a fresh perspective to help make a USMS membership more valuable.

My professional life as a financial advisor, my swimming experiences, and volunteer efforts will help bring perspective to help grow our organization. I have developed the ability to manage and develop relationships and foster growth with those on my committees. Flexibly, communication, listening, and critical thinking are skills I can add to the USMS at Large Director Board position.

***What do you consider to be the major issues facing USMS now and in the future? As a person holding an elected position within USMS, how would you address these issues?***

Issue 1. Enhancing the USMS swimmer experience. Tracking the development and prioritizing the needs of all member swimmers and volunteers, from the new/fitness swimmer, coaches, generational swimmers, college club swimmers and competitive swimmers will be essential for the organization to continue to be of value and help USMS stay relevant in today's everchanging environment.

Issue 2. Belonging to an organization that has a Philanthropic cause is valuable for the USMS membership. Expansion of ALTS programing, and fitness programs, and integrating USMS and the USA swimming foundation philanthropic partnership, marketing successes, will only help create future growth opportunities for USMS. In 2021, the USMS/USA Swimming foundation completed its first successful grant cycle. It was a great honor to serve on the grant evaluation committee. We have a great national cause that will continue to make USMS brand more relevant by continuing to add educational workshops, financial support and expand community involvement across the country which is critical to organizational growth and its membership.

Issue3. Marketing the USMS brand. With most service organizations that have many loyal and supportive members, the emotional component in change can be hard to integrate with the "non-emotional" hard wiring of technological advancements. This is where board leadership plays a key role in the growth and development of the organization. Continuing to develop and deliver a clearly defined communication process with the USMS National Office and its Board is essential. The two must continue to evaluate and create transparency through accountability in delivering the information we share with membership. Communicated constantly, progress and relevant information will help foster a forum that attracts and helps prioritize the multitude of ideas that are valuable in promoting organizational growth (in general people are attracted to a consistent message and tend to disengage with inconstant message).

Issue 4. Post pandemic challenges. Critical and creative thinking are vital for the future growth and success of the organization. My prior organizational and board involvement can help provide a new and fresh perspective in this area.

***Please list USMS committees on which you have served. Include the dates you were on the committees and the names of the committee chairs under whom you served:***

Current USMS positions:

USA Swimming Foundation Board member 2021-2024 Recommended by President Peter Guadagni

Swimming Saves Lives Foundation, Chair 2017-2021. Served under USMS Presidents Patty Miller and Peter Guadagni.

ALTS programming committee member Marlys Cappaert 2022

Ad-Hoc Adult Learn to Swim Programming Committee Ex-Officio 2020 (present) Carrie Stolar, Chair

Previous USMS positions: Investment Committee, 2016-2019, Phil Dodson, Chair, Stan Benson, Chair

Swimming Saves Lives, member 2016-2017 Brandon Franklin, Chair

***Please list any other experience that relates to your qualifications for the position.***

***Professionally:*** Financial and Wealth Management Advisor for Northwestern Mutual for 33 years. B.S. in Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering from Penn State University. Served on several Industry and Nonprofit Boards.

***USMS Experiences:***

Past Lake Erie Chair 2017-2021  
Lake Erie Secretary 2013-2017  
USMS Adult Learn Instructor Certification, 2018  
OHIO Masters Club member, 2009-present  
USA Swimming Foundation USMS representative 2021 -2024

***Please list any other information you would like included.***

Lake Erie Relay Swim across Lake Erie, SSLF fundraiser raised \$9,200 for SSLF Grants, 2016  
Penn State University, College of Earth and Mineral Sciences Alumni Association Board Chair, 1996-1999  
Penn State University Alumni Council member, National Service Week Chair, 1997  
Penn State University Alumni Association, Volunteer of the Year, 1999  
Northwestern Mutual Association of Agents, Field Advisory Board, 2009 - 2012

Cornerstone of Hope (Ohio regional grief center) Development chair and executive committee member responsible for fundraising with a 2.6 million annual budget, 2010-2021

Gay Games Cleveland 2012-2014, Cleveland Community Development Chair, Lead a fundraising campaign that Raised \$4.2 million in sponsorships and community grants.

Million Dollar Round Table member, (International Association of Financial Professionals) Divisional Vice President 2017. Currently elected class A trustee for the MDRT Foundation Board (manage and oversee \$36 million Foundation that awards \$2 Million in grants all across the globe), 1997-present

Helped create the USMS Swimming Saves Lives fundraising auction 2019,2020 and transition the auction with the USA Swimming Foundation Golden Googles Auction 2021. USMS members donated unique auction Items that helped USMS meet it fundraising goal for grant programs nationwide.

***Please write a short summary statement that will be posted on the display board with your photograph at the HOD Meeting***

Serving the Great Lakes Zone's membership and USMS, I would bring leadership, integrity, and perspective while representing our swimmers and volunteers. We all come to swimming through different paths. My swimming journey started as a beginner swimmer, progressing to a fitness swimmer, open water distance swimmer, competitive pool swimmer, and USMS volunteer both on the local and national level. In 2021 I had the opportunity to help transition the philanthropic side of adult learn to swim grants in partnership with the USA Swimming Foundation. This experience will help us to share ideas and fresh perspectives with USMS so that ANY Adult in our country can have access to swimming opportunities! Whether we are celebrating our successes, supporting our peers, helping others to learn to swim, improving one's ability to swim, or offering moral and financial support when we struggle in our swimming communities, the miracle of swimming together unites us all and helps us care (and do things we never thought we could!).



**U.S. MASTERS  
SWIMMING**

Date: April 26, 2022

Subject: Nomination of Jay DeFinis, for At-Large Director, Great Lakes Zone

To: The Elections Committee

I nominate Jay DeFinis for the At-Large Director from the Great Lakes Zone.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan D. Cox".

Sincerely,

Daniel Cox

USMS Member in good standing, Great Lake Zone



**U.S. MASTERS  
SWIMMING**

Date: April 26, 2022

Subject Line: Recommendation of Jay DeFinis, for At-Large Director, Great Lakes Zone

To: The Elections Committee

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Jay DeFinis, who is a gifted, committed and talented gentleman, for the At-Large Director from the Great Lakes Zone.

I have had the pleasure of working with Jay DeFinis the past several years on the Adult Learn To Swim committee, the Great Lakes Zone and through grant programs offered through USMS. As someone who manages many people on a daily basis, I am comfortable telling you that Jay is a highly motivated, intelligent, engaging person who strives for success, which is obvious by the level of professional and volunteering roles he participates in throughout his career.

Jay's abilities truly serve as a model for his fellow U.S. Masters swimming volunteers, and his peers often seek him out for his ideas and views. He possesses a charisma and leadership quality that professionals, volunteers and associated organizations alike are drawn to: Mr. DeFinis is a quality person. Jay is an outstanding person in character, ability and attitude.

Therefore, I can recommend Jay DeFinis without any reservations for the At-Large Director from the Great Lakes Zone. I can think of no more deserving person. If there are any further questions please feel free to contact me at the phone number below.

Swimmingly,

Lisa L. Brown  
Great Lakes Zone Chair, USMS  
Vice Chair of Indiana LMSC  
Level 4 USMS coach  
Aquatics Director and Founder of Zionsville Aquatic Masters



**U.S. MASTERS  
SWIMMING**

Date: April 5, 2022

Subject Line: Recommendation of Jay DeFinis, for At-Large Director, Great Lakes Zone

To: The Elections Committee

I am writing to you today to enthusiastically recommend Jay DeFinis for the position of At-Large Director from the Great Lakes Zone. Jay has successfully served as the Lake Erie Masters Secretary and Chair. He has also volunteered on the national level for USMS where he has been on the investment committee, served as an (ex officio) member of the ALTS Programming Committee, and chaired the Swimming Saves Lives Foundation. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the USA-Swimming Foundation.

Jay began with USMS as a fitness swimmer, progressing to participating in triathlons, most notably an Ironman, open water swims, including a relay swim across Lake Erie to raise money for ALTS, and competitive pool swims. From there he got his ALTS instructor certification to help others begin their swim stories. He has truly experienced the full progression of swimming. With this background, he is tune with the motivations of the fitness swimmer, the open water swimmer, and the competitive pool swimmer as they relate to USMS membership.

After running a successful Financial Planning practice for over 30 years, Jay's business and finance knowledge will be an excellent addition to the Board of Directors. He has proven experience in fundraising and collaborating on boards for other organizations. In working with Jay on the SSLF and ALTS Programming Committee, I have firsthand experience of his strong communication and listening skills, not to mention his flexibility, critical thinking skills and ability to develop relationships with others. These skills will help him become a strong member/contributor on/to the USMS Board of Directors.

Jay's experience and skills coupled with his passion for swimming and his dedication to our organization make him an ideal candidate for this position.

I am pleased to endorse his candidacy for At-Large Director from the Great Lakes Zone, and give my permission for this letter to be advertised to USMS delegates

Sincerely,

Carrie Stolar

Secretary, USMS

Ex-Officio, ALTS Programming Committee

Chair, Minnesota Masters LMSC