



## MARJORY MARTIN: WHY I SWIM

*Registration opens May 3 for the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Women Swimmin' event that will be held August 14. See [www.womenswimmin.org](http://www.womenswimmin.org) to register or for more information.*

It is barely light out at 6:45 a.m. and I'm one of 150 women stripping down to our bathing suits out on a boat in Cayuga Lake. Although it is mid-August, we are all chilly as we take off our turtlenecks, sweatshirts and sweatpants and we are also a little bit nervous and a lot excited! We put on our matching swim caps and jump in.

I must admit that, although I swim in the lake all summer, at 5:30 a.m. when the alarm goes off, the thought of doing this is not very appealing, but when we arrive at the Ithaca Yacht Club and women are greeting each other with such love and laughter, it starts to feel really good. There is so much cheer and chatter on the boat ride across.



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Watching the sun and the mist rise over the lake is breathtaking. We swim in pods. Our pod is about a dozen of us – a bunch of friends, some family members and anyone else who needs a group to swim with. This past year we decided to be a little fancier and we all wore pink and white polka dot swim caps and some of us wore pink bathing suits too - really cute!

The seventh annual Women Swimmin' for Hospicare fundraising event is August 14. I have been swimming across the lake in this event since the first year. My reasons for swimming have changed and grown over these seven years.

Seven years ago my friend, Ann Costello (whom I had been swimming with since 1971), told me about the event and that this was something we could do together with our long distance swimming skills. I was thrilled and thought it sounded like a really fun and worthwhile thing to do. It turned out that we were both really good at fundraising as well! It also turned out that this was a much more emotional, meaningful, and rewarding event than I could have ever imagined! Each year it is more so.

The first year, the swim was a fun novelty and, after all, everyone loves Hospicare! Each subsequent year there have been more reasons for me to swim. At first, it was the enthusiasm with which people donated their money. Then there were the many stories my supporters would tell me about their own experiences. After that I had my own first-hand experiences with a family member and then with a very close and dear friend. I saw, for myself, the amazing level of

support and care that my close people received from the nurses, the volunteers, and the staff at Hospicare.

What I did not expect and what amazes me every year is the effect the event, itself, has on me and on all of us. Once we jump into the water, we are surrounded by boaters who are as friendly and supportive as anyone could be. Women are chatting with each other as they swim (this is never a race and no one really knows or cares who is the fastest) and chatting with the boaters and the voices spread through me with warmth. When I can just begin to see the flags and the people lined up and cheering, someone calls out that we are about half way across the lake. I can smell the coffee and hear the music playing and I am filled with an indescribable feeling of happiness, community, and love!

Climbing up the ladder, getting out of the water, at the end, and being greeted by hugs and applause is remarkable. Some people might call it endorphins, but it is so very much more. Every aspect of this event is thrilling. I am so extraordinarily lucky because in August I will get to do it all over again!

*Marjory is a potter, and pottery teacher, whose work can be found at the Handwork Cooperative Craft Store on the Commons. She is the mother of four adult children, including three daughters, whom she hopes will some day be in town at the right time to swim with her. Her husband and son also have supported the event as boaters and as an avid cheering section.*