



JUDGES' COMMENTS:

"A great facility and swim program helping a community through aquatic education, recreation and competitive swimming."

BEST UNIVERSITY/SCHOOL (Class 17)

Margaret M. Clark Aquatic Center, Brownsville, Texas

For a community of 150,000 surrounded by wetlands, unguarded beaches and the Rio Grande River, the Margaret M. Clark Aquatic Center is essential to teaching kids and adults how to swim and be safe around water.

This center was designed for the Brownsville Independent School District, but is available for the entire community's use. To keep drowning levels low, it offers Fundamentals of Swimming for second-grade students, who learn aquatics basics. In addition, there's the Special Needs Aquatic Program, aka SNAP, for Special Education students from elementary through high school levels. Both programs teach approximately 14,200 students in Brownsville's 47 elementary, middle and high schools to swim each year.

Swimming isn't the only thing the center provides. Industry specialists can take classes for pool service technicians, and AFO and CPO courses. This is part of Aquatics Director Louis "Sam" Fruia's mission to educate more people about the industry itself, and it also would help prevent accidents and drownings.

A review of the center's swim coaches at one point revealed that only two of 15 had any kind of aquatic certification, whether a WSI or LGI. That situation was remedied and today, every one of them is not only certified to coach swimming, but also receives continual training from organizations such as the American Swimming Coaches Association, United States Diving, Red Cross and the Association of Pool & Spa Professionals. The center also provides CPR, first aid and Sports Safety Training to 1,700 area coaches.

— Rin-rin Yu



FACILITY HIGHLIGHTS: Hosts the South Texas Swimming Championships, the University Interscholastic League's Region VIII Swimming & Diving Championships, and the TAPPS Swimming & Diving Regional Championships • Offers aquatics basics to second-graders in the school system • SNAP reaches out to the Special Education community

FEATURES: 1 outdoor pool • 2 indoor pools • 1 therapy pool • 1 diving well • 5 diving boards • 1 movable bulkhead • 1 movable floor

PROGRAMMING: Learn-to-swim • Diving • Lifesaving • Water aerobics • Water therapy • Competitive swimming • Masters Swimming • Water polo • Scuba • Snorkeling • Canoeing • Kayaking • Adaptive aquatics • CPO/AFO/Tech I & II