

My name is Ethan Vance and I have been a proud member of the JCAY Barracuda swim team for three years. I have chosen to continue my academic studies as well as my swim career at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO as a Tiger. I will be pursuing a degree in sports medicine.

I played every sport growing up like football, baseball, soccer, and golf. It wasn't until I found swimming my sophomore year of high school that I felt like I truly found my passion in the sports world. I joined my high school swim team on a random invitation from a friend I vaguely knew from school. It wasn't too far into the season when I realized I may actually have some success in the sport and possibly a future if I put in the work. This led to me finding a club team to train with and compete with throughout the year and that is when I found the Barracuda swim team. This team has been my home and my family over the past couple of years and we have traveled the country swimming and competing at the highest level one can reach as a club swimmer competing at the YMCA Nationals for the past 2 years and at Junior Winters this past year.

The core values of the YMCA, Respect, Caring, Responsibility, and Honesty are all fundamental values that play an important role in our everyday lives. They shape our character and influence how we interact with others.

Respect is about treating others with courtesy and consideration. Recognizing the inherent worth and dignity of every individual regardless of their ability, background, or beliefs. When we show respect to others we create an environment of mutual understanding and appreciation for each other. Being a part of the swim team taught me how to respect others whether it was shaking hands with competitors or cheering them on. Supporting the success of others or hardships is something I want to be known for. I have been given tips and received tons of support from many swimmers and coaches from other teams. I value that respect and support across the board in this sport and want to continue to give that respect to others.

Responsibility is a lot like respect in that it forces us to take ownership of our actions and be accountable for their consequences. It means fulfilling our obligations to ourselves and others at all times while showing maturity and integrity. Being a part of the swim team shaped my foundation for having responsibilities. I have to show up to practice on time. I have to be in the water at a certain time. I have to be at the meeting on time. I have to be at warm ups on time. I have to stay dedicated to 5 days of practice a week in order to stay in shape to compete at the highest level possible for myself and represent our Team/YMCA. I was the oldest member of the team and knew I had a lot of eyes on my actions. I felt the responsibility to demonstrate these things well and didn't take it lightly.

Caring is shown by showing empathy, compassion, and concern for others. Care is demonstrated in kindness and support. It creates a sense of connection for each team member and fosters relationships with each other. Being a part of the swim team let me build relationships with people of all ages I will know and love forever.

Honesty is the foundation of trust no matter what you're dealing with. It is shown by being truthful, sincere, and transparent in the words we use and the actions we take. Honesty is about not skipping sets because you have to "go use the restroom" when you really just don't want to do it. It is about not skipping yards, it's about believing in the coaches to do what they are best at and you do what you are best at. These values are all connected and reinforce each other when all used together. For example, being responsible leads to being respectful. Being respectful shows you care, and honest is always the best choice. Learning these values is important not only to me as a person now, but I know I will carry these with me into my future as an adult. I am thankful for the opportunities given to me to demonstrate these values under the name of the Jefferson City YMCA Barracude team.