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Long Island Swimmers Unite to Fight Cancer in Annual Charity Swim

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Dozens of Long Island residents are preparing to dive into the Long Island Sound this weekend for the annual Swim Across America event, a nationwide initiative supporting cancer research. The fundraiser, which has generated over \$14 million in Nassau and Suffolk counties since 2001, continues to draw hundreds of participants committed to combating the disease.

Swimmers will gather Saturday at Prybil Beach in Glen Cove to tackle distances ranging from half a mile to 5 kilometers. On Sunday, the challenge intensifies in Cold Spring Harbor with a 10-kilometer (6.2-mile) swim. Participants train for months in preparation, with many teams dedicating the effort to loved ones affected by cancer.

One of the event's most visible figures is 69-year-old Steve Chestler of Woodbury. Leading a nearly 100-person squad named Team Carolyn—honoring his late wife, who passed away from adenocarcinoma in 2021—Chestler has raised more than \$110,000 individually. His wife, a passionate swimmer who once crossed the English Channel, inspired the tribute.

“We’ve probably been training for this for at least 10 weeks ... two or three times a week, everybody was getting over 5,000 yards,” Chestler told *The New York Post*, highlighting the team’s commitment.

Team Carolyn has already raised \$215,583, reaching 86 percent of its fundraising goal. According to Chestler, team members were surprised by how quickly support poured in from friends and community members. “They called me up and said, ‘Steve. I can’t believe I did it so easily,’” he recalled.

Swim Across America operates across the United States, hosting charity swims to benefit local research hospitals and cancer institutions. Funds raised from the Long Island events primarily support research initiatives in the region.

Chestler summed up the mission behind the event: “Everybody is definitely affected by this horrific disease — and we want to try and cure it.”

The Swim Across America movement reflects the growing role of community-driven efforts in advancing healthcare solutions, demonstrating how personal dedication and collective action can make waves in the fight against cancer.