

Dear Dean Narciso

I am writing to bring to your attention errors in your recent article titled "Worthington Pools loses Red Cross accreditation a month before \$11.4 million levy request" published 1:08 p.m. October 3, 2024. The article, based almost entirely on one councilperson's unsourced blog, contains several inaccuracies that seems should have been easily disproven with ethical fact checking, and has caused significant harm to Swiminc, Inc.'s reputation in the community we serve.

Ethical questions we have:

- What is the Dispatch's code of ethics related to reporters covering issues within their own residence locality?
- Why was this so biasly written and published less than 24 hours from Mr. Robinson's blog post?
- What was the rush?
- Why not allow reasonable time for due diligence fact checking?
 - The Swiminc, Inc. Board of Directors is made up of community volunteers that due to professional and personal commitments conduct business after hours. We make decisions as a board, not autonomously, and should have been provided the reasonable expectation of time to formulate an agreed upon response to Mr. Robinson's blog content and distribute to interested parties. It should be noted that we had accomplished this task also within 24 hours of the aforementioned blog release.
 - The allegations of Mr. Robinson's blog were not fully fact checked with the American Red Cross prior to the release of your piece.

Here are the untruths from the article for which Swiminc, Inc. expects full and vigorous retraction and correction, equally as vigorous an emphasis applied as was to your article repetitive false content:

- 1) A month before Worthington voters will be asked to raise their taxes for a new outdoor pool complex, the longtime pool operator that would partner with the city has lost its American Red Cross Permission to train lifeguards.
 - a. False: The Licensed Training Practitioner Agreement between ARC and Swiminc, Inc. remains intact.
- 2) The oldest pool was built in 1968; two others were rebuilt in the 1990s
 - a. I refer you to the following link for accurate historical information.
<http://www.worthingtonmemory.org/exhibits/2022-7-1/wade-history-worthington-s-community-pool>
- 3) In a September 9 email obtained by Dispatch, Timothy DeLucia, a quality assurance consultant for the American Red Cross Training Services, terminated Swiminc's instructor agreement, meaning the organization is "no longer permitted to teach any Red Cross course or hold yourself out as authorized to teach any such course."
 - a. This is a misinterpretation of facts resulting in the Dispatch publishing false information leading to considerable damage to our organizations reputation and public perception.
 - b. The above article statement and quote are a direct reference from a letter issued to former Director of Aquatics, Lori Ave, giving her notification that her own individual Instructor Agreement is terminated.

Clarifications for consideration:

- 1) While it is true that participant certifications from violation impacted courses have been voided, all impacted Swiminc, Inc. staff were reimbursed and/or retrained during the consultative process in such a timely manner that most all recertifications were complete prior to previously impacted certifications being voided. There were a few stragglers, as a result of availability, who's recertifications were completed upon return to work. All impacted staff were also paid their hourly wages during recertification. All participants in voided certification classes no longer with, or never employed by, Swiminc, Inc. were notified, reimbursed, and/or offered to schedule for recertification courses at no charge. All impacted students still working in aquatics and either employed with Swiminc, Inc. or outside our organization who responded to our notification, have been restored their accredited certification at no cost and the entire certification issue is confirmed with ARC to be resolved.
- 2) You irresponsibly republished Mr. Robinson's blog content allegations that our Executive Director, Steve Hawkins, falsified Red Cross documents with no completed fact checking confirmation. Mr. Robinson had teed this up to you in manner that would be most damaging to Swiminc, Inc. and you in effect carried his torch with your verbatim republishing his words with no balanced perspective.

In this instance, due to extenuating circumstances, Steve did sign the single training roster document in question. Steve openly discussed this scenario that brought him to making this decision during the consultative process with the American Red Cross. The ARC considered this a minor violation, so minor that Steve Hawkins is not even named in the findings provided to Swiminc, Inc. by the ARC. Steve and staff were advised on the matter, the ARC made correction to the document for accuracy of record, and this item of the matter was closed.

- 3) There is no disputing the findings of the 2-year lookback audit: violations of minimum instruction times; running courses in parts with separate instructors and poor progress tracking; two instances of 14-year-old registrants not 15 by course completion; course records consistently not entered correctly. Having said that, I stand by my response to the July 15 Worthington City Council meeting that Swiminc, Inc.'s Licensed Training Practitioner Agreement has never been in jeopardy and that all discovered issues, now documented in the three notifications sent to Swiminc, Inc. (Caleb Strack), Lori Ave, and Karen Dayton, are attributed to past leadership no longer with the organization. Through attrition, reorganization, and new hire activity we have in place new leadership that has seen us through our uncovered deficiencies and compliance gaps, and demonstrated themselves competent and capable of leading positively, responsibly in full compliance, with integrity into the future.
- 4) Douglas Southgate, while acting President of Swiminc, Inc. Board of Directors, was a chief proponent of the process to select Brandstetter-Carroll from 8 possible firms (in partnership with city and school district representation), pay for their architectural designs and proposals of three optional recommendations with Swiminc budget, and eventual champion of the design option three. He carried a deteriorated failed piece of current facility infrastructure pipe with him as evidence of the need for a reconstructed facility and frequently vocalized the \$100,000 design package gift we had given the city to present the best possible solution. Doug resigned from the Board of Directors in lieu of removal. It was not long after he began to assert himself as the voice and face of opposition even as his arguments were continually debunked.
- 5) The proposed 50-meter pool, to replace the current middle pool of the facility, is primarily designed with features to attract a more diverse multi-generational demographic for recreational use. A secondary benefit is an expanded use and revenue stream for our

competitive programming. This is a positive growth opportunity of more efficient and effective design with negligible variance between current and proposed pool capacities.

Given the serious implications of this misinformation, I respectfully request a retraction of the false statements and corrections and/or clarifications to be published in The Columbus Dispatch. I believe it is essential to ensure that your readers receive accurate and truthful information.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,
John M. Ament, PHR, SHRM-CP
Swiminc Board of Directors
Vice President & HR Consultant