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A HISTORY OF THE Aquanuts

Waterskiing has a long, rich history in Wisconsin and is a great family sport. In 2002, as the now-closed Tommy Bartlett Show in the Dells, celebrated its 50th anniversary, Gov. Scott McCallum proclaimed Wisconsin to be the Water Ski Show Capital of the World. Nearly 30 teams from all around the state soak up every last drop of summer performing entertaining shows for their communities.

The largest and longest-running water ski show competition in the world, the Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Championships, is held in Wisconsin Rapids each summer. Many of the top water ski show teams in the nation call Wisconsin home. With most teams performing water ski shows on a weekly basis, Wisconsin offers world-class water ski entertainment featuring some of the world's most talented water skiers.

In 1972, the Aquanuts started as a few families enjoying a common interest, performing 8 shows that year. The Aquanuts became well known for their Clown Act in the late 1970's and early 1980's featuring Bobo (Kent Yunker) and Bub (Gregg Borowski). Over the years, the team has grown in numbers, increased safety, created more difficult acts, used more powerful boats, becoming the award-winning, highly competitive team they are today.

More than 50 years later, the Aquanuts are still putting on free shows from Memorial Day weekend to Labor Day weekend for the Twin Lakes, Wisconsin community on the beautiful shores of Lake Mary at Lance Park.

Last year the team achieved several accomplishments. Celebrating their 50th anniversary in style, the Aquanuts won back-to-back state titles for the first time in 35 years and brought home their sixth national title. They now hold more than 10 state titles, six national titles, and three Triple Crowns (Mercury Open, state and national).

The team includes third-generation skiers consisting of amateurs that range in age from young children to retired adults.

Adorned in decorative costumes and wetsuits, they dazzle audiences with their shows of unique and creative feats that would be difficult to perform on land, much less while skimming across the water. Human pyramids, barefoot skiing, jumping, ballet lines, swivel skiing, and strap doubles are just a few of the acts packed into an action-filled water ski show.

Each year, they put together a "theatrical" production on the water. This year's theme, Peter Pan, takes the audience



The Aquanuts celebrate the Fourth of July with a flag display in the 1970s. The water ski team performs on Lake Mary at Lance Park in Twin Lakes to celebrate Independence Day each year.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AQUANUTS *The Breeze*

to the shores of Neverland on a wild chase that keeps them on the edge of their seats.

The tension builds as Peter Pan and the Lost Boys attempt to rescue Wendy from Hook's band of pirates. Will Peter be able to return her to Neverland? Perhaps with a little faith, trust, and of course, some pixie dust, he will succeed. Find out for yourself.

Show dates and upcoming events include

Home shows are at 6 p.m. unless otherwise noted. Aquanut Waterski Shows are at Lance Park, 55 Lance Drive Twin Lakes. For more information, email admin@aquanuts.com or call 866-Ski-Show (754-7469).

Scheduled shows include:

Wednesday, July 26
Saturday, July 29
Wednesday, Aug. 2
Friday, Aug. 4 – Junior Team
Saturday, Aug. 5
Wednesday, Aug. 9

Wednesday, Aug. 16 – Co-Show w/
Junior Team
Wednesday, Aug. 23
Saturday, Aug. 26
Wednesday, Aug. 30
Saturday, Sept. 2 – final 2023 show and
Annual raffle Draw

Corn Fest

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Wisconsin State Water Ski Show Championships

Thursday, July 20 – Sunday, July 23
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Indmar Show Ski National Championships

Friday, Aug. 11 – Sunday, Aug. 13
Hosted by the Lake City Skiers
Hidden Lake
Warsaw, Indiana

The Breeze

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on the cover: The Aquanuts form a pyramid during a water ski show on Lake Mary.

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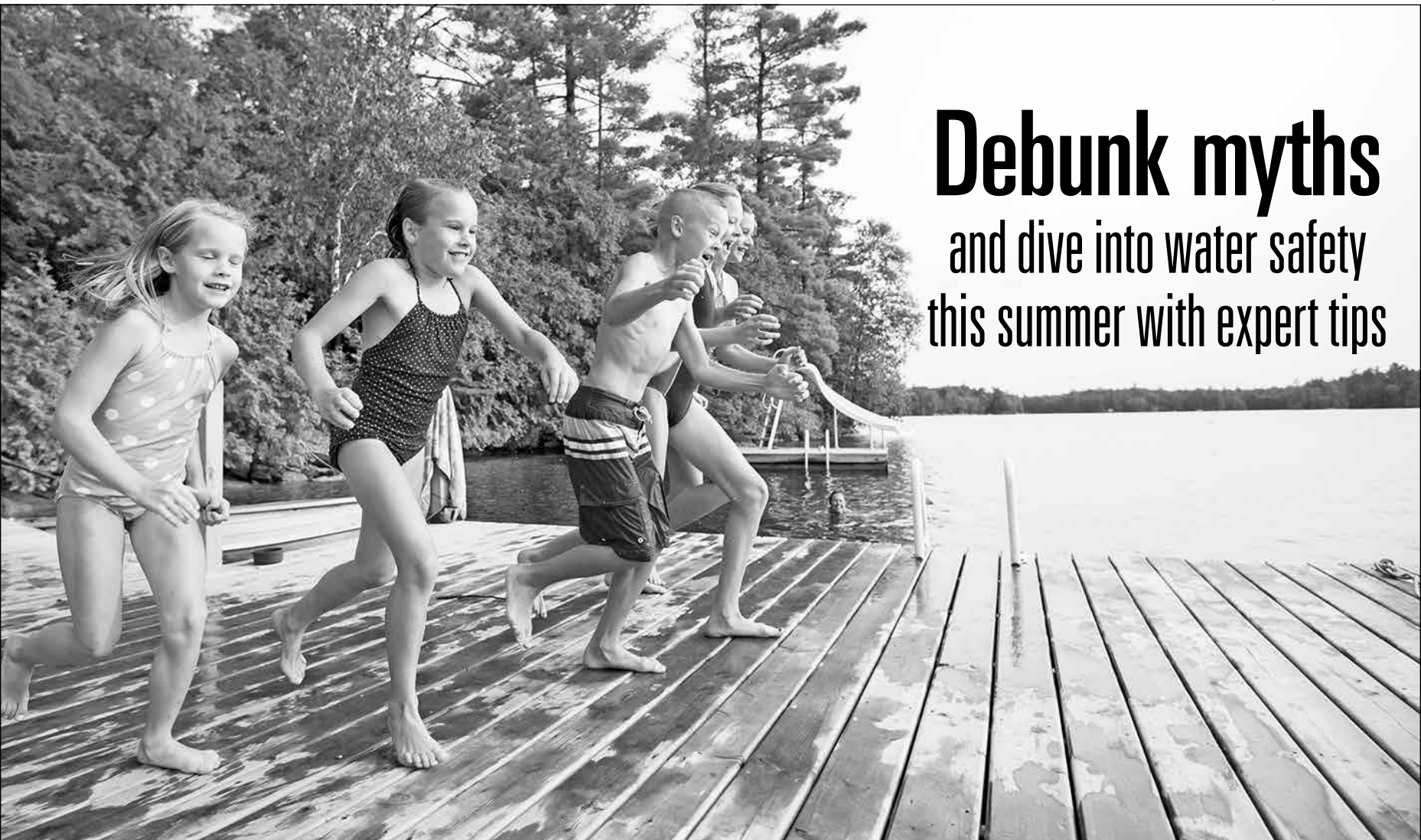
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Debunk myths and dive into water safety this summer with expert tips

Booked summer plans? Check. New bathing suits for the family? Check. Swim lesson enrollment? Priority check!

Water safety is essential, yet many people get confused by misinformation that puts kids at risk. Step Into Swim provides need-to-know information to ensure swimming activities are safe and fun for all involved. The program is led by Rowdy Gaines, three-time Olympic Gold Medalist and Vice President of Partnerships and Development at the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance.

With a passion for creating more swimmers and expanding access to swim education, Gaines wants to keep everyone safer this summer by debunking some of the most widespread myths about water safety.

Myth – Splashing and screaming are signs of drowning. While 83% of parents who have a child ages 14 or under are confident in their child's ability to be safe in the water, many parents (60%) incorrectly assume someone who is drowning will draw attention to themselves by splashing and screaming, according to a Step Into Swim survey conducted by The Harris Poll. Drowning is silent, meaning the person won't scream or splash

because they are struggling to breathe. This underscores the importance of swim safety.

Myth – Drowning takes several minutes to occur. Drowning can happen in seconds, so it's critical to consistently watch children in the water - even if they know how to swim. Watch kids closely because drowning can happen in the time it takes to send a text message.

Myth – Parents can teach their kids to swim and lessons aren't needed. While supporting your child and encouraging water safety is important, teaching kids to swim is best left to trained instructors. Learning to swim from a qualified instructor reduces the drowning risk by 88% among children ages 1 to 4, according to the medical journal Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine. Caregivers can complement the lessons learned from swim instructors by practicing the skills with their children.

Myth – Floaties and water wings are safe and help kids learn to swim. Parents may think floaties and water wings keep children safe in the water, but they offer a false sense of security. Many children don't realize that when they remove the water wings, they lose their ability to remain afloat. Two-thirds of parents who have

a child ages 14 or under (66%) believe floaties and water wings keep children safe in the water, according to the survey. But, they are not recognized as safe personal flotation devices. Caregivers must keep a constant eye on children in the water to make sure floaties remain on and secure.

Myth – Dry drowning is a danger. Dry drowning is not a medically accepted term and may be misused to refer to other medical conditions, such as pulmonary edema or laryngospasm. Drowning injury is caused by lack of oxygen and respiratory impairment from submersion in water. It doesn't refer to the amount of water entering the lungs, according to the American Red Cross. To help avoid drowning, families need to enroll kids in swim lessons and practice supervision.

Water safety steps for everyone

Unfortunately, drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death in children ages 1 to 4, and the second leading cause for children ages 5 to 14, according to the CDC. Before jumping into the water, follow these best practices to help keep children safe.

- Enroll your child in swimming lessons. Parents have a responsibility to keep kids safe in the water;

- Keep toys away from water when not in use. These can be distractions for children, who may overreach and accidentally fall in the water;

- Designate a water watcher to keep a close eye on children and put the cell phones down;

- Only practice safe behaviors, such as entering the pool feet first and walking instead of running;

- Avoid breath-holding activities;
- Learn CPR and keep your skills fresh with ongoing training;

- Keep kids hydrated and take frequent breaks from the sun to limit heat exposure; and

- If you have a pool, use multiple layers of protection, such as pool covers, fencing and locked doors.

For more resources and information, visit StepIntoSwim.org.

(BPT)

Learning to swim is a lifesaving skill that empowers children to be confident in the water.

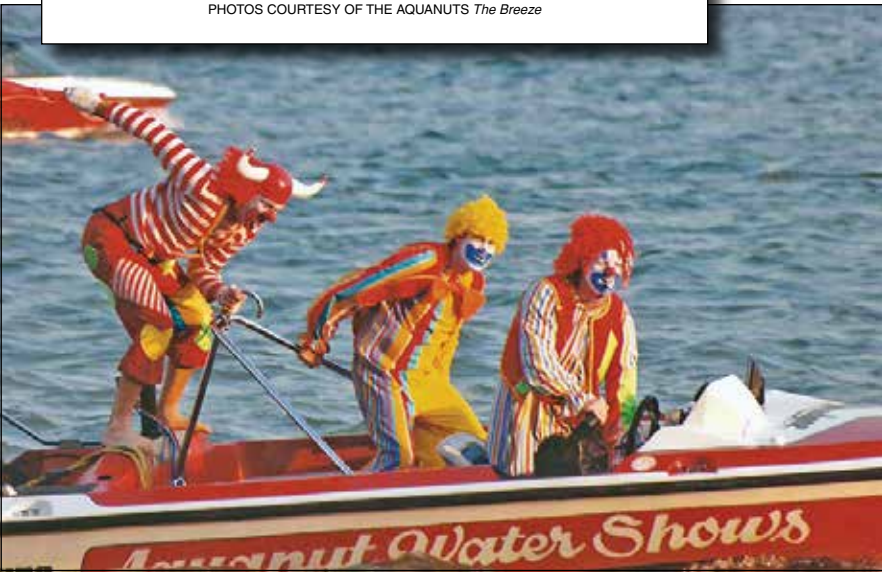
STOCK PHOTO *The Breeze*



Through the years

Take a look at the Aquanuts through the years. Photos by Lisa Neal, Calli Scheele with Inspired Wakes Photography & Keepsakes, Jim's Photography, Nancy Rzonca and Mara Rosenbloom of Mara Faye Photography.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AQUANUTS *The Breeze*





LIKE A DUCK TO WATER



Waterskiing provides plenty of joy for area team

By **Sandra Landen Machaj**

CORRESPONDENT

Last year was a special year for the Aquanuts.

The award-winning waterski team that calls Lance Park in Twin Lakes home not only won the Wisconsin State Championship, but followed it up with a national title as well.

“After 50 years, it was a great time for the team to come together and the right time to skate out to victory,” said Mark Gurda, who has been the announcer for the Aquanuts the past 10 years. Six of the team members also went on to participate as members of Team USA internationally.

Members of the team who continued on to International Competition included Lake Geneva’s Kailey Koehler – a seven-

time member of the USA Team – and her father, Bob, one of the team’s boat drivers. The Koehlers were joined by team members Ethan Shuda (Twin Lakes), Craig Planton (Waterford), and siblings Cody and Kaila Coffey (Silver Lake).

Those team members did not get to celebrate the nationals’ win with their teammates. By the time the win was announced, they were already en route to the fifth International Waterski and Wakeboard Federation event on Lake Silver in Winter Haven, Florida.

The state title was the second consecutive win for the Aquanuts after not winning at the state level for 35 years. The team often placed well in competition and received awards for various individual and line activities, however.

Individual state titles last year were also earned by Karley Koehler and Ethan Shuda as most valuable female and male at the state competition, respectively, while the team received the “Best in Jump” award.

“The team won handily in competition at the national competition,” Gurda said. “Making the perfect ending to a wonderful year for the team.”

The Aquanuts have come a long way since the team’s inception in the early 1970s, when it began as a small volunteer group with no home and no major sponsors. A small \$5 fee was charged to join, according to the team’s history on their website.

In order to be successful, a waterski team requires a strong support team, many

boats with powerful motors and equally important competent drivers. The team also requires coaches, artistic directors, a sound system and announcers, costumes, gas for the boats and repairs when needed, and most important, a place to perform.

The Aquanuts were fortunate to find a permanent home in their second year, when a swampy area at Lance Park was awarded for the team’s use.

Over the years the area has been upgraded and now includes a five-row, terraced area for visitors to enjoy the show, refreshments, as well as indoor rest rooms. Big-name sponsors such like Dr. Pepper and many local marine vendors soon joined the Aquanuts, helping the team grow into the award-winning team that they are today. Local vendors have

at right: Will and Danielle Baezley perform a duet on Lake Mary during the Aquanuts' season-opener in late May. **below:** The Aquanut's ballet line delivers a routine May 27 at Lance Park Beach in the Village of Twin Lakes. **opposite:** Members of the Aquanuts form a three-high pyramid on Lake Mary earlier this season.

JASON ARNDT PHOTOS
The Breeze



donated motors, boats and even skis to the team.

The Aquanuts put on a variety of inventive shows, introducing show themes that included the popular clowns, along with dance and ski routines.

In 1979, the ballet line was chosen best in competition in state, while the team took first place in that competition. They followed this win with a third-place finish in the national competition that same year.

The four-tier pyramid was introduced into their competition routines in the 1980s.

As the team begins this year's show season, there are always concerns. Each year, it becomes a different team as members move away, go off to college, or in some cases, turn professional. According to Gurda, this year's team is smaller. They often base a show on musicals and this year is no different, as it is loosely based on "Peter Pan."

Team members come from throughout the area. Even though the team is based in Twin Lakes, not all members of the team live there. Some come from Lake Geneva and other Wisconsin communities as well as from northern Illinois. Some of these water skiers may have family summer homes in the southeast Wisconsin area, while others make the trip in regularly for team meetings, practices and performances.

Since team members begin to work on their routines long before they hit the water, they are coming to practice workouts often when there is still snow on the ground. The early practices are somewhat like a ballet rehearsal, perfecting a routine and learning to perform together in a ballet line or a pyramid on land before they are ready to take to the water.

Even when they are ready to hit the water, it's not necessarily fun. This spring was a good example of how the season in the Midwest can vary, as temperatures varied from unseasonably

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 11





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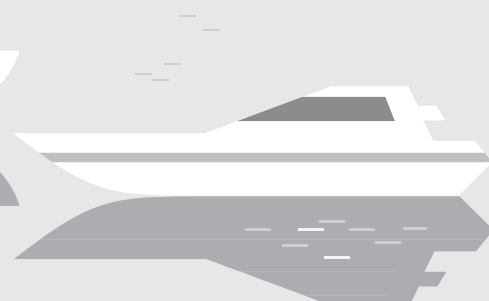
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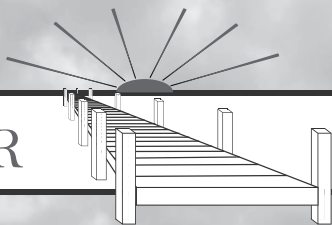
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WATERSKIING • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

warm to unseasonably cold. Water in May is often not warm, nor are skiers looking at the water as respite from the hot sun.

Even with sponsors, the team requires additional fundraisers, as the team does not charge to attend summer performances. Tips are always appreciated and the weekly donations go to help with the team's expenses. An addition, a yearly ad book is published that highlights the team and is sold to raise money, both through ad sponsorships and sales.

The Aquanuts began their performance

schedule this year on May 27 and will continue to present shows open to the public at Lance Park, 55 Lance Dr., Twin Lakes, every Wednesday and Saturday at 6 p.m. No entry fee is charged to watch the show and free parking is available.

Working with Graceful Wakes, the Aquanuts assist in a day that provides an adaptive water ski event for both adults and children over the age of 6 years with disabilities. This year it was on July 11.

For more information about the team, visit aquanutwatershows.com.



top: Maggie Kelly, of the Aquanuts, swivel skis in front of a crowd of spectators during the team's season-opener in late May at Lance Park Beach in the Village of Twin Lakes. **above:** Carter Boerman (left) and Aquanut teammate Brandon Kirchen perform a routine together earlier this season on Lake Mary.

JASON ARNDT PHOTOS *The Breeze*

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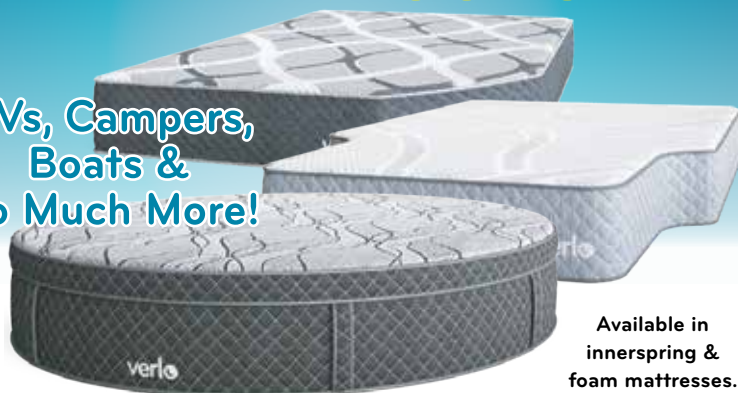


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