

From the Sports Desk with John English

## Senior Athlete Tribute: Western Hills HS Swim Team



Western Hills High School swim team members are: (back row, l-r) Captain **Jenna Mullender**, **Cam Leonard**, **Daisy Alfaro**, **Aaron Brown**, **Michael Vasquez**; (middle row) **Mariah Reyes**, **Isaiah Russ**, **Grace Wagner**; (front row) **Abby Hackney**, **Mackenzie Dudley**, **Anaid Del Rio Alcantara**, not shown: **Lavigne Graves**, **Arianna Castle** and **Paulina Sifuentes**.

The Western Hills swim team faced a couple of challenges during the 2019-20 season and current off-season, something coach Nancy Wendell hopes will make her athletes even more prepared for next year.

Wendell was affected by a personal issue during the season and the COVID 19 outbreak has disrupted off-season workouts.

Wendell said that in spite of the difficulties, her swimmers have persevered, and said she is very proud of the poise and dedication they have displayed.

“This group of swimmers were outstanding as we went through the season,” Wendell said. “We faced adversity several times, and yet, the group worked through to a successful year. I am so proud of the leadership and character displayed by all the members of our WHHS Swim Team. Unfortunately, I had to take leave of absence the month of December due to my mom being sick and several of the seniors left the team at that time.”

One senior that remained, senior captain Jenna Mullender, had an outstanding season, and said being a member of the Cougars swim program has been special for her.

“I’m glad to have been a part of the WHHS swim team my junior and senior years,” Mullender said. “Coach Wendell demonstrated to all of us the value of hard work, perseverance, and goal-setting, always encouraging us to do our best as athletes and people. This made being on the swim team so important to me as it became a great outlet to de-stress from school while bettering myself.”

Mullender swam in four events at the district meet, including the 200 Individual Medley, 100 Breaststroke, 200 Free Relay, and 400 Free Relay, all of which qualified to move forward to the regional meet in Frisco.

The Western Hills senior was also named Scholar Athlete of the year for Western Hills High School and was the Valedictorian of her graduating class.

Wendell said this year's seniors leave some big shoes to fill, and said she has had to make some adjustments to the off-season plans.

“Working toward next year, the returning swimmers have been given land exercises to strengthen since no pools have reopened,” Wendell said. “WHHS has a wonderful group of swimmers coming back this fall and they will work hard to recover lost time in the pool. I can't wait to see what's ahead.”