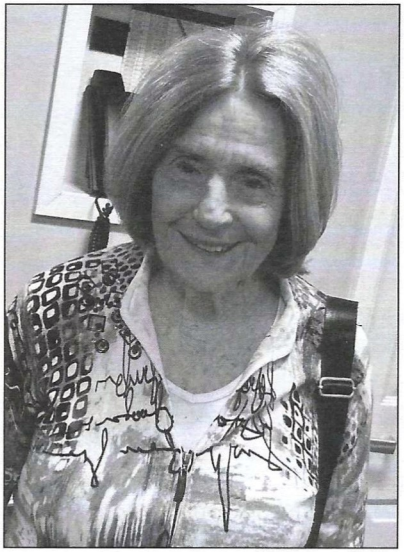
Gwen Donovan

Coach: Girls Swimming & Boys Swimming



Coach Gwen Donovan is the person most responsible for establishing the Boys' and Girls' Swimming teams at Westford Academy. Specifically, Donovan sought to create a high school swim program "... to provide Westford Academy swimmers who work out 5 to 7 days a week the opportunity to exhibit success among their peers..." In the fall of 1981, Donovan's dream of creating a girls swim team for Westford Academy was realized. From the start, the program faced many challenges: there was a lack of money; the new team was 100% self-funded; there was no pool in town; and, there was no league for the team to compete in. Despite this, the team finished in the top ten at Sectionals during their first two seasons. By the third season they were routinely finishing in the top three in the Merrimack Valley Conference, North Sectionals, and States, cementing the new WA team as one of the top swimming programs in Massachusetts.

In the midst of this success, Donovan was working tirelessly behind the scenes to bring a boys' team to WA. Again, with little support, she maneuvered to bring five Westford club swimmers to the 1985-1986 North Sectional and State races where they finished 3rd and 5th respectively. A year later, now with the support of School Committee, the WA Boys' Swim team officially began. Similar to the girls, the boys' team enjoyed early success under Donovan's leadership, as they consistently finished in the top three of the MVC, the top five at Sectionals, and the top ten at States. The ultimate honor came in 1987 when the *Lowell Sun* recognized Donovan as "the Coach of the Year."

After the 1990-1991 season, Donovan retired from coaching. In her ten years at WA Donovan teams finished in the top three in the MVC eight different times; top five finishes at Sectionals seven different times; and top five finishes at States six different times. Additionally, she had at least ten swimmers win individual state titles. Her impact on the sport of swimming locally and on the athletic program at WA cannot be overstated. Simply put, she is the person most responsible for creating the Boys' and Girls' Westford Academy Swimming teams. A program that would go on to serve more than a thousand WA student athletes, winners of more than two dozen state titles, and place more than a half dozen swimmers into the WA Athletic Hall of Fame.