

MAKING A SPLASH



PETERS TOWNSHIP MOM JOCELYN VINCENT REKINDLES HER LOVE OF WATER POLO.

BY JENNIFER BROZAK

Peters Township resident Jocelyn Vincent spent her high school and college years playing and then coaching a sport she was increasingly passionate about—water polo.

Born and raised in Texas, she excelled at the sport in high school, which led to her being recruited to play for Iona College, an NCAA Division I school in New York. Following college, Vincent began coaching the girls' water polo team at her former high school, St. Agnes Academy in Houston, which she graduated from in 1999.

Then, a series of life events, including her desire to start a family, derailed her playing and coaching efforts. She left her job as a science teacher to stay at home to raise her three children, ages 4, 5 and 7, effectively putting the sport on hold—that is, until her family moved to Pittsburgh in 2017 for her husband's career.

"I never would have imagined that water polo would ever be in my future again," Vincent, 37, says.

The summer she moved to Pittsburgh, a friend mentioned that water polo was alive and well in western Pennsylvania. A quick Google search elicited a response from a member of the Pittsburgh Renegades water polo club, who invited her to come to a practice.

"I was terrified, but I had the absolute best time ever," she recalls. "Everyone was so great and so welcoming."

She quickly found herself ingrained in the sport once again, and has since become one of the sport's biggest supporters in the Pittsburgh area.

"Everyone is so friendly and kind, and we're all there to do something that we all enjoy," she says. "I literally laugh half of the practice, usually at myself because I try to do something that I could easily have done many years before and failed miserably."

As a busy mom of three kids with a husband who frequently travels, staying in peak physical shape and finding time to practice can be tough. An avid runner who's also training for the New York City Half Marathon and the Pittsburgh Marathon, she tries to exercise at least one hour a day. Depending on pool availability, the Renegades typically practice once a week.

"Water polo is physically challenging and you have to be in great physical shape. It's really like basketball in water. You literally push against another person to keep position," she explains. "[But] I am in no way, shape or form in the physical condition I was back in college."

In the past year and a half, Vincent has seen the team grow exponentially. One of six team members who work together to run the team, she handles communications. The team receives several tournament invitations each month, and hosted a large, 12-team tournament over Labor Day weekend. They've also scrimmaged Pitt a few times.



She tries to make traveling for tournaments a family affair if possible, taking her children along with her for the journey. Her young daughters are starting to show interest in the sport; her oldest daughter joined the Peters Township Club Team a few months ago and her other two children will be starting swim lessons soon. All three will swim for the Valley Brook swim team this summer.

Vincent's also hoping to launch an "Intro to Water Polo" course at Valley Brook. There are numerous opportunities throughout Pittsburgh for children to play the sport. North Allegheny offers Noodle Water Polo, where children learn to play on a pool noodle, and Peters High School is building a new pool and is expected to start a water polo team. Other local schools, including Chartiers Valley, Mt. Lebanon and South Park, have all started youth teams.

"I love it here. I think that the city is incredibly unique and it has so much to offer," Vincent says. "Finding the Renegades helped me find myself again, and my health. If I could get just one more person to share in the love that I have for this sport, then I would be so happy."

Anyone looking for more information about adult or youth water polo programs can contact Jocelyn at jocelynvicent12@gmail.com. For more information about the Pittsburgh Renegades, including links to the team's social media accounts, visit renegades.4rs.org. ■

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