

Keeping Fallston cool for 40 years

BY ABRIELLE WILLIS
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For nearly half a century, the Fallston Club has provided summer amusement to the community.

The swim club, owned by its members and run by a board of directors, is a 19-acre spread on Route 152 in Fallston.

"A lot of people who live here don't know we are here," pool manager Raymond Brown said. "We are tucked back here, a kind of hidden gem."

The Fallston Club celebrates its 40th anniversary this year.

The facility originally opened on Saturday, Aug. 16, 1969 for a partial season. The first full season commenced the following year.

Members of the Fallston Club are guaranteed access to the its four pools — a baby pool, two intermediate and one advanced —and playground equipment, an on-site catch-and-release fishing pond, basketball and volleyball courts, grills, pavilions and a concessions stand, adeptly named Sink or Swim Cafe.

"I like the funnel cake," said 6-year-old Jameela

Murray, whose family just joined the pool this month.

"The grills are very nice," Debi Desaulniers, of Fallston, a third-grade teacher who has belonged to the club for 23 years, said. "They provide the charcoal. All you have to do is bring the food."

Members can also register for swimming and tennis lessons, and the Fallston Club even offers a tennis-only package.

"We did swim lessons," first-year member, Christine Infussi, of Fallston, said.

"I am working on dives," Infussi's 8-year-old daughter, Kendra, said.

The Fallston Club swim team, the Fallston Fins, competes each summer in the Harford Swim League.

"There were 175 kids this year. We are competitive, but a lot of fun," Brown said.

Their 2010 season ended with five wins and three losses.

As far as happenings go, every other week, the pool hosts a bingo night. Two Saturdays a month is Raft Day, when members are encouraged to "Bring Your Own Raft"

Please see POOL, AA6



CONRAD SULLIVAN FOR THE AEGIS

Matthew Weigand prepares to take the plunge while enjoying some fun at the Fallston Club Tuesday afternoon.



CONRAD SULLIVAN FOR THE AEGIS

The Fallston Club, owned by its members and run by a board of directors, is a 19-acre spread on Route 152 in Fallston. With four pools as well as playground equipment, an on-site catch-and-release fishing pond, basketball and volleyball courts, grills, pavilions and a concessions stand, it offers members a summer filled with fun.

Memories of growing up at the pool in Fallston

I spent probably a dozen summers at the Fallston Club, or "the pool" as we called it in those days. And I loved every minute of it.

Reading Abrielle Willis' story brought back a lot of memories for me.

My family joined the pool the summer we moved to Fallston from New Jersey, in 1976, when I was 4 years old. My brother was just 1. We didn't even live a mile from the pool, as the crow flies, so it seemed logical we would join. It was a place for us to go in the summer where my brother and I could get out all our energy and meet new friends.

Not that we knew it then, but we were among the first generation of families to enjoy the pool, which opened for its first full season in 1970.

I imagine we spent our early days at the baby pool, before we graduated to the intermediate pool and then the "big pool."

We took swimming lessons there, as well as tennis lessons. I was also on the swim team one year. I wasn't very good, but I made it through the whole season (probably because my parents wouldn't let me quit something once I started it). I'm still a pretty good swimmer, just not very fast. I learned all the basic strokes, but one I regret never learning was the butterfly. It just looks neat.

I remember when the new pool, which became the "back pool," was built. It was awesome when it was open because that was where all us kids would go when the lifeguards

whistled it was "adult swim" time in the main pool. I always hated that, especially since it never seemed like very many adults wanted to swim.

That was also the time the playground was the most crowded. My favorite part of the playground was the tire swing, the one that hung from a chain. We would spin round and round and round and round. I loved that swing when I was a kid, but I just can't take those kinds of spinning rides anymore.

I think I had my first boyfriend at the pool. I think it was Steve, and we held hands, and that was a big deal. At that age, having a boyfriend didn't mean much, but I'm pretty sure it was the first time a boy I liked, liked me back. Our relationship didn't last too long, a few days maybe.

I remember wanting so badly to impress the lifeguards, who I thought were so cool. I'd use the new skills I'd learned in my swimming lessons and practice them in front of the lifeguard chair, hoping for some kind of praise. I'm sure they appeased me, probably just so I'd go away.

When we were really young, my mom would come with my brother



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and me. She'd sit in a lounge chair watching us while we swam. It was there she met one of her closest friends, Miss Jody. Turned out she and her family lived in the neighborhood next to ours. Our families became quick friends, since Miss Jody's daughter was my age and her son was my brother's age. When we weren't at the pool, we would cross the stream between our neighborhoods to play with each other. It saved our parents lots of driving.

Speaking of walking, it was a momentous occasion in my life when I was allowed to walk to the pool. We lived close, but off a pretty busy road without sidewalks. So when I was allowed to walk, it meant my mom trusted me. It also meant no parental supervision once I got there, an added bonus.

One of the best things about going to the pool was being able to eat dinner there. It didn't happen often, but when it did, it was a big deal. We'd pack up a cooler full of sandwiches, chips and drinks and wait for Dad to get home from work. Then we'd head up for dinner and an evening swim — after waiting 30 to 45 minutes for our food to digest, of course. The pool was relatively

empty compared to during the day, and my dad didn't get to come with us too often because he was working, so much of our time was spent with him. He could throw us high and far. If we stayed long enough, the lights in the pool came on!

I loved the diving boards. The high dive wasn't so high, but in those days I thought it was. On the low dive, I worked on my back dive. I remember once specifically when something went wrong and I landed flat on my back, a backward belly flop, if you will. It hurt like heck and stung for hours. I recovered, eventually.

My friends and I used to play group games of tag and Marco Polo. We'd dunk each other and race from one side to the other. We'd see who could hold their breath the longest or who could do the best handstand.

If you didn't go to the pool with anyone, or you weren't meeting someone there, there was always some group of kids you could join up with.

The pool was just a great overall place to be, and I can't think of a better place I could have spent my summers. I was with friends, getting exercise and having a blast.

From reading Willis' story, it doesn't sound like things have changed much in the 25 or so years since I belonged to the pool. It's great to know other generations of children, and their parents, have enjoyed the pool as much as we did.

Congratulations on 40 years.

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