

Just Keep Swimming

By Adam C. Olson
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Twelve-year-old Monica Saili loves swimming. She is one of the top young swimmers in New Zealand. She may be part fish.

Well, the fish part probably isn't true. But the only other explanation for why she's so good is because she trains so hard.

She's at the pool for two hours every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at 5:00 a.m. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday she runs track or cross-country after school.

Her least favorite swimming drill is having to do the butterfly stroke with just one arm, keeping her chin up, and alternating arms every 100 meters. "Your shoulders really burn," she says.

But she's learned that when the going gets hard, giving up doesn't make life easier. Doing the hard work is what makes her stronger.

Hard Work and Hard Times

All that hard work has helped. She started winning medals at age 10. At 11 she was in the country's

top 10 for her age group in the butterfly stroke. At 12 she was selected for a development swimming camp with the national team and was picked to swim in the Oceania Games in Samoa against swimmers from other countries.

She says, "My dad always said, 'Success comes with hard work. It doesn't just land in your lap.'"

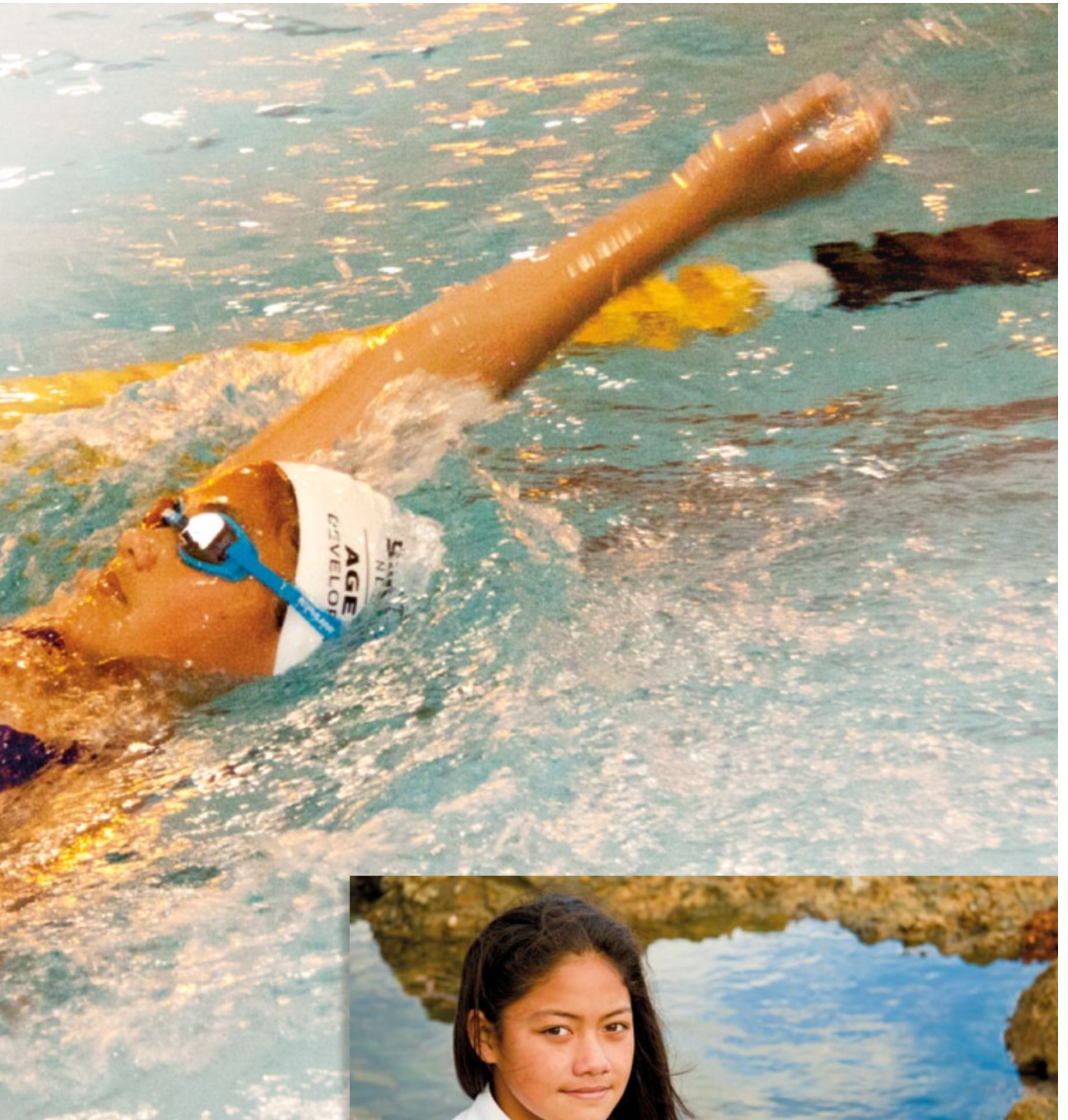
Monica learned that is true for swimming, and she found out it's also true in life when her father died unexpectedly a few months after her 11th birthday.

"I was very close to my dad," Monica says. "He started me in swimming. He took me to all my practices and competitions. When he died, I felt like I had no one to talk to."

Don't Give Up

Losing her father was hard. But Monica doesn't give up during difficult practices, so when her dad died, she wasn't going to give up on her faith in Heavenly Father either.





Monica Saili has learned that giving up when things get hard doesn't make life easier.





DON'T GIVE UP!

"There are occasionally hard days for each of us.

Do not despair. Do not give up. Look for the sunlight through the clouds."

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008), "The Continuing Pursuit of Truth," *Ensign*, Apr. 1986, 2.

With her mother's help, Monica has made it through some hard times. Along the way she learned that hard things can't keep her from being happy.



"My dad was my example," she says. "He taught me how to live the gospel."

Since his death Monica has started studying the scriptures before bed, "trying to make it a habit," she says. She stands up for her beliefs at school. "I get a lot of questions about the Church," she says. And she serves as the ward music director.

"I am blessed for being a member," Monica says. "I am comforted when I get too stressed."

Stronger in the End

Monica still misses her father. But with the support of her mother and family, she keeps going.

Her life is full of piano and violin lessons, student council meetings, swimming, Personal Progress, and leading

the music during sacrament meeting.

She doesn't know yet how far her swimming will take her or how long she'll stick with it. But as far as the gospel is concerned, she is determined to stick with that to the end.

"Sometimes life is hard," Monica says. "But doing hard things can make us stronger. You just have to keep swimming." **NE**

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