



Chicopee Register photo by NATE ROSENTHAL

From left, Chicopee Comprehensive High School swimmers Aaron Starke, Melissa Asselin, Coach Jjim Mercer and swimmer Ryan Linzi. The swim team raised \$7,000 last week for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti.

Swimmers raise money for Haiti relief effort

By Nate Rosenthal
Correspondent

CHICOPEE — Times of tragedy toften brings out the best in people. After the devastating earthquake in Haiti, many have swung into action to do what they feel is their part. One such group on the local front is the Chicopee Comprehensive High School swim team.

The Chicopee Athletics Department has been encouraging community service from all of its athletes and in that spirit, the swimmers asked their coach, Jim Mercer, if they could do something to help in Haiti. The solution was to have a swimathon, where the swimmers would seek out pledges for yards swum. The plan came together quickly and on Jan. 23 the team came together at the high school pool for their swimathon.

Three groups were designated

as sources for the funds raised — Unicef Children of Haiti, the Haiti Earthquake Relief Fund and the Boston Foundation. The latter promised to match all contributions.

As for the swimathon itself, the swimmers showed up in two shifts of two hours each and swam up to 200 lengths of the pool (5000 yards). This came on a day after a meet, when they do not normally practice.

They were responsible for their own counters and then had to collect the money. Thus far, \$7,000 has been raised

To add a little excitement to the proceedings, Mercer challenged them. He decided swim along with them to raise money. He also offered them a bonus: if the top ten swimmers combined beat his total, he would take them all out to dinner. He reports the turnout was excellent.

Below is a list of those Comp

swimmers who participated: Seniors Ryan Linzi, Tanya Roy, Melissa Asselin, Sarah Moeller, Jackie Purcell, Shelley Kratzer, Michelle Lemelin and Aaron Strake; Juniors Dan Ng, Peter Buckley, Kevin Romaniak, David Miner, Shelby Gray, Nicole Leaper, Kristin Veber and Holly Allen; Sophomores Sabrina Gray, Tyler Nelson-Yarrows, Nate Roy, John McNeill, Jess Spagnoli and Mike Dzweit and Freshmen Kelly Hiersche, Emily Laino, George Fotopoulos, Jeremy Frederich. The head counters were: Sean Linzi and Marissa Walczak.

On a humorous note, Mercer points out that his sprinters were quite sore after this "workout" and that distance swimmer Nate Roy completed his 200 yards while Mercer, himself was still finishing 130. He gave credit to Asselin, who is a diver and not used to swimming that much at once.