

2023-2024 Annual Report – Niko Nestor Charity

Bank Balance: £ 2132.54

Fundraising events

The Niko Nestor Charity, through the Embassy of the Republic of North Macedonia has established a collaborative relationship with the Embassy of Mexico, focusing on fostering connections between the countries.

1. **Legacy of Niko Nestor and Miguel González López:** with this event, the charity is dedicated to honouring the inspiring legacy of Niko Nestor and Miguel González López, who famously swam across the English Channel in 1959, symbolising perseverance, friendship, and international collaboration.
2. **Planned Joint Event:** A joint event between North Macedonia and Mexico is being organised to celebrate the historic friendship between the two countries. The event will commemorate Niko and Miguel's achievements and highlight the unifying power of sport.
3. **Values Promoted:** The event will focus on promoting values of unity, camaraderie, health, water safety, and youth empowerment through swimming, aligning with the charity's core mission.
4. **Event Vision:** The event aims to bring together stakeholders, communities, and enthusiasts from both nations, featuring cultural exchanges, storytelling, and activities that highlight the historical significance of Niko and Miguel's journey.
5. **Community Impact:** The event is designed to inspire future generations to uphold the ideals of unity and collaboration and deepen the Macedonian Mexican bond
6. **Future Steps:** Plans are in place to move forward with organising the event, with ongoing support and collaboration from both countries' stakeholders, and organise similar fundraising events with other countries.

'Coach the Coach' program

- **Partnership with Akva Sport and Ohridski Branovi:** In collaboration with the Macedonian swimming and water polo team, **Akva Sport**, and the coaches from **Ohridski Branovi**, a select group of coaches has been identified for participation in the **"Coach the Coach" program**. This initiative aims to further develop coaching expertise, particularly in open-water swimming, through online sessions, with the possibility of in-person sessions in the future.
- **"Coach the Coach" Program Details:** The **"Coach the Coach" program** is being conducted in partnership with **Red Top Swim**, a hub for athletes renowned for their expertise in both pool and open-water swimming. This collaboration focuses on:
 - a) developing the fundamentals of swimming into technically advanced strokes.
 - b) transferring these skills from the pool into open-water conditions.
- **Target Group and Objectives:** The program is designed to coach at least **5-10 coaches** from North Macedonia (and potentially neighbouring countries) who are eager to enhance their skills in open-water swimming coaching.
- **Program Structure and Goals:** The primary goal is to develop coaching expertise in open-water swimming, with the aim of preparing coaches and swimmers to swim the **English Channel** in a relay. This ambitious goal will not only motivate swimmers but also encourage teenagers to continue in the sport and pursue swimming at a higher level.

- **Engagement with Red Top Swim:** **Matt Dugan** from **Red Top Swim** has participated in an online meeting with the charity to discuss the program's structure and objectives. A clear framework for success is being developed to ensure the program's impact and effectiveness.

Encouraging Youth Participation

The program aligns with the charity's goal to encourage young swimmers to remain engaged with the sport and continue developing their skills, with the **CSA Awards ceremony** serving as a powerful reminder of the extraordinary achievements possible through perseverance and dedication.

As part of the **"Coach the Coach" program**, the charity is also focused on engaging and inspiring the next generation of swimmers, particularly youth, to stay connected to the sport and develop their skills in open-water swimming. A key component of this initiative is the planning of a **youth open-water event**, which will take place either on the **River Drim in Struga**, which flows into **Lake Ohrid**, or in another location around **Ohrid**, as discussed with **Michel Read** and in alignment with the wishes of the late **Niko Nestor**. This event will offer young swimmers the opportunity to experience open-water swimming in a natural and challenging environment, encouraging them to embrace the sport at an early age.

The event is expected to bring together youth swimmers from North Macedonia and neighbouring countries, providing them with an exciting platform to showcase their skills, build confidence, and foster a love for the sport. It will also emphasise the connection between coaching excellence and the development of young athletes, in line with the **"Coach the Coach" program's** objectives.

This initiative holds great significance, not only as a competition but also as a celebration of **Niko Nestor's** vision. His dedication to the sport and his belief in the power of swimming to connect and empower individuals across borders continues to inspire the charity's efforts. The event will honour his legacy by encouraging youth participation, just as **Niko Nestor** himself embodied the spirit of perseverance, friendship, and international collaboration throughout his career.

Niko Nestor Award Swimming for Peace at the 2024 CSA Annual Dinner event

At the CSA Annual Dinner Event 2024, the prestigious **Niko Nestor Award for Swimming for Peace** was presented to **Team Indian Dolphins** for their incredible achievement.

Team Name: TEAM INDIAN DOLPHINS

Swimmers:

- RACHNA SHARMA
- SAMIIR WHEATON
- SHAASWAT SHARMA

Country: India

Type/Route: Relay (3 Swimmers), 1 way / England to France

Completed: 17th July 2024, 6:00 PM

Time: 11 hours, 31 minutes

Pilot/Vessel: Stuart Gleeson / Sea Leopard

Observer: Jon Miell

The announcement of this remarkable accomplishment was shared widely on social media, amplifying the impact of the award. The recognition extends far beyond the event itself, sparking inspiration and motivating others—especially young individuals—to aim high and relentlessly pursue

their dreams. This ripple effect encourages a new generation to set bold, audacious goals and embrace the dedication needed to achieve them.

Collaboration with Halliwick Penguins Swimming Club

This year, our charity extended its support to an event where swimmers with disabilities from the Halliwick Penguins Swimming Club in Southgate, London, aimed to qualify for the British Long Distance Swimming Association. The Halliwick Penguins, established in 1949 as the first Halliwick swimming club globally, operate entirely on a voluntary basis, teaching water safety and promoting independence in the water for individuals with any type of disability, regardless of age. (source: www.halliwickpenguins.org)

This initial engagement has blossomed into a meaningful collaboration between our organisations. Notably, we have connected with their open water swimming coach, Christina Symeonides, who has agreed to be a guest speaker at one of our upcoming meetings. We are also exploring the possibility of her participation in our 'Coach the Coach' program, aiming to enhance coaching techniques within our charity.

Additionally, we are considering organising joint events during the Halliwick Penguins' regular swimming sessions. Such initiatives align with their principal aim of providing a safe and friendly environment for disabled individuals to learn and practice swimming.

This partnership signifies our commitment to fostering inclusivity and supporting the development of swimming skills among individuals with disabilities.

Our Commitment to Fostering Skills Among Disadvantaged Children

In line with our objectives, the Niko Nestor Charity is dedicated to advancing health and saving lives by providing free swimming lessons and comprehensive water safety training. We promote community participation in healthy recreation, particularly by offering swimming facilities. Our efforts are directed towards benefiting children and young people, especially those who are disadvantaged worldwide.

Through collaborations like the one with the Halliwick Penguins Swimming Club, we aim to extend our reach and impact, ensuring that disadvantaged children and young people have access to essential swimming skills and water safety education. This commitment not only enhances their physical health but also contributes to their overall personal development and well-being.

Ohrid Swimming Marathon

Niko Nestor was the honorary president of the Ohrid Swimming marathon. Brazil's Matheus Evangelista (men) and France's Caroline Jousse (women) won this year's Ohrid Swimming Marathon, held in Ohrid on 31 August. Evangelista completed the 25-kilometer race in 5:45:05, while Jousse finished in 5:46:51.

Evangelista, who previously placed second in 2015 and third in 2016, described this year's race as particularly challenging due to strong winds and waves but expressed joy at his victory. In the men's category, Marcel Schouten from the Netherlands finished second, and Macedonian Evgenij Pop Acev took third place. Among the women, Argentina's Mayte Puca secured second, while France's Ines Delacroix came in third. (source: MIA, <https://mia.mk/en/story/37th-ohrid-swimming-marathon-ends-with-winners-from-brazil-and-france>).

Now in its 37th year, the Ohrid Swimming Marathon serves as the final event of the Water Festival, organised by the Municipality of Ohrid with support from the Ministry for Sports and the Swimming Federation of Macedonia. Trustees Zora Nestor and Victoria Nestor were present at the event and introduced the Niko Nestor Charity to the President of North Macedonia Dr. Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, who is also the patron of the Ohrid Swimming Marathon.

Social media and Web page development

- Webpages are in the process of being updated with a new template that will include a payment processor, allowing for smooth donations and easier event registrations. This upgrade is expected to improve user experience and streamline our operations.
- Volunteer and Cambridge student, Stefan Mitik, has taken the role of creating a LinkedIn profile and posting news and events on social media, helping to increase the visibility of the charity and engage with a broader audience. Through his efforts, we hope to foster a stronger online presence and connect with more supporters and potential donors.
- Stefan is also working on developing regular updates and content to ensure our followers stay informed about the charity's progress and upcoming events. His contributions are crucial to building awareness and encouraging community involvement in our mission.

Victoria Nestor- Chairperson