



In 2006, I signed up just to “fill a spot,” it was the 200-yard Freestyle; what was I thinking? I hadn’t swam in 20+ years and never competitively. But I figured I would give it a try. I get to the event., I’m nervous. I have no clue what I am doing and it shows. While standing in line, a very nice person in my age group, by the name of Roxanne, reassures me it will be fine, “just go out there and do your best.” This is my first KCCC event as a competitor, so I get up on the pool deck, jump in the pool and plan to do the whole thing using the backstroke. The starting gun sounds and off I go. When I finish my first lap, most everyone else is finishing the race, or close to it. I think about quitting, and then I hear it. The encouragement from the stands, people I have never met before, people from other companies cheering for me. I know everyone else is finished but I keep going. One lap becomes two, two becomes three -- and on the fourth lap, when I feel like there is no way I can finish, the cheers become louder and louder. It was as if they could tell I needed that extra boost. I finished that 200 yards; completely on my back; 8 minutes and 16 seconds later. I was the slowest person that day in any age group, but I finished it. I would have quit at the halfway point if it hadn’t been for all those strangers, actually all of the KCCC family who cheered me onto a last place finish, but third in my division. That was the start, I was hooked. The competitive spirit in me, which I hadn’t felt since my high school track days, came to life. Since then KCCC has become more and more a part of my life. I’ve been a competitor (11 years), an Event Coordinator (9 years), Company Coordinator (6 years), and an Ambassador (4 years). You will see me at better than 90% of the events wearing my Empower T-shirt and KSU ball cap. KCCC isn’t just about the competition; it is about the friendships, the events, the pushing each other, the supporting each other, the sportsmanship and most importantly the family. I am very proud to say I am part of KCCC’s 32,000 and growing family.

Balena McClung-Grosscup
Empower Retirement