

Swimming Around the World with One Leg: Salvatore Cimmino, an Ordinary Hero

Bianca Soria (June 30, 2014)



On June 28th Salvatore Cimmino, a 50 years old Italian amputee, completed the last leg of "SWIMMING THE SEAS OF THE GLOBE", an initiative with the goal of raising awareness about disabled people and that took 4 years to complete. A race not against time but against architectural barriers, for the dignity of the disabled, for their integration and active participation in all aspects of social life

When he was just 14, Salvatore suffered from osteosarcoma, and in order to save his life, his right leg had to be amputated well above the knee.

At the age of 40, under medical advice to help his recurrent back pains due to the use of obsolete prosthesis, Salvatore took up swimming.

He could just barely float when he started. Then, eight months later, on July 15th 2006, he made his first crossing from Capri to Sorrento, (22 km), without any prosthetic aid!

Soon after that Salvatore's race of a lifetime begins. It's not a race against time, but against architectural barriers, for the dignity of the disabled, for their integration and active participation in



all aspects of social life.

It's a race for awareness, to remind governments that investing in disabled people, in the latest technologies, is a duty and a resource.

It's a reminder of the importance to strive towards creating disable-friendly cities.

It's a race to partner with banks and trade associations to generate financial instruments which can support disabled people at various stages (including financial) on their path to recovery.

It's a race to promote a campaign aimed at ensuring that the National Public Health Systems provide the latest in prosthetic design to all in need.

Salvatore started off in 2007 by organizing his "SWIM AROUND ITALY" during which he swam ten legs of about 15kms each around the Italian coastline from Genova to Trieste.

In 2009 he undertook his "SWIM AROUND EUROPE": 6 legs of up to 40 kms each, including the Strait of Messina, the Strait of Gibraltar, Oresund Strait from Copenhagen to Malmoe, Salvore Cape to Trieste and the English Channel, where he broke the all time Italian record, previously held by an able bodied person.

In 2010 he began his project "SWIMMING THE SEAS OF THE GLOBE. For a world without barriers or frontiers", a new challenge to conquer the seas of the entire planet. It saw him swimming in the seas of the world: Israel, Italy, Slovenia, Argentina, Canada, New Zealand, in the waters of Lake Kivu in Congo, Australia and Mexico, and United States. On the 28th of June he concluded the Tour in Manhattan participating to the New York Swimming Marathon.

The 54 km race was organized by the Manhattan Island Marathon Swim with 23 participants. He arrived 15th after swimming for 9 hours 34 minutes and 46 seconds in very cold water, at the end of which he was met by the Italian Consul General of New York Natalia Quintavalle and the Vice Consul Roberto Frangione.

This is what Salvatore has to say about his future endeavours:

"Whilst in New York I was also honored to be invited by the United Nations to formally present my project to the 7th Conference on the UN Convention on People with Disabilities. This event gave me still more strength and determination to continue along the path that will help bring down the wall between civil society and the world of the disabled. My next effort will not involve swimming a long distance crossing but facing the challenge of touching the conscience of world governments to see them legislate in favor of the integration of People with Disabilities through improved mobility, inclusion in the work force and education systems, access to technologies – in a word: the full rights of citizenship. "

He may have not embarked on these races to set any record, but there is no doubt that Salvatore's achievements have turned him into a true champion, an inspiration to many, an example of strength and spirit to us all.

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Links

[1] <http://www.iitaly.org/files/salvatorecimminomessina-scilla1404143372jpg>