**Meet New Member**

**Joannie Campbell**

*By Kathleen Jamison*

***﻿*Our Own Swimming Champ**

New Friendship Force member Joannie Campbell started competitive swimming at age 59 at the Senior Olympics in Connecticut. Late to the pool, but fast to the finish, she won her first race and 30-plus years later she is still winning gold medals and setting records. “I’m competitive,” the Palm Harbor resident admits. At a youthful 92, she’s not yet the oldest active member of the U.S. Masters swimmers competing in regional, national and international competitions, but is working on it. She is recently back from Orlando and San Antonio where she added to her impressive collection of lifetime golds. But the best part of the Texas meet, she says, was having 14 family members show up to cheer her on. “We did a lot of partying,” she says.

Joannie’s dedication to the sport is more than just time in the pool. She is co-manager of the 100-member Florida Aquatic Combined Team and has had other leadership rolls for many years, including serving as head of Florida’s Senior Games and running an area swim meet, both for 25 years.

“Swimming has given me good health and a zest for living, as well as a host of friends all over the world,” she says. Now that Covid has loosened its grip, she is back training at the Long Center pool in Clearwater. She also walks three miles most mornings and works out three times a week at the Y.

After raising four children and a career as an executive with a New York insurance company, Joannie and her husband Jim started transitioning to Florida in 1989 and moved here permanently in 2003. Their travels included sailing their 40-foot sailboat on the Saint Lawrence River and trips to Scotland, Jim’s ancestral home. International swim meets have taken her to New Zealand and Budapest among other far flung locales. Sadly, she lost her life and travel partner a few years ago.

FFFS member Carol Davis gets credit for introducing Joannie to the club. Now she is looking forward to spending time between laps getting to know us, hosting Ambassadors and having some FFI-style travel adventures.

