

The following was presented by Board Member, June Contini, at the Hall of Distinction Ceremony of the Dover Historical Society on May 1, 2022

Hunter Armstrong- Citizen of the Year- 2022

I am excited and thrilled to have the opportunity to recognize a young man who is known world-wide as an Olympic Gold Medal winner. You may know who I am talking about and maybe you even know him personally, well, he's none other than Hunter Armstrong! Today we honor him as Citizen of the Year!

Because of his training schedule, he and his parents are not able to attend our luncheon. But his grandparents, Tom and Karen Armstrong, are here to acknowledge his award.

I met with Hunter's parents, Ryan and Edie, and his grandparents a few weeks ago. As I listened to the chronology of Hunter's formative years developing from a skinny struggling boy and at times the underdog he has turned heads and became a strong swift winning swimmer while keeping himself humble and compassionate.

This gave me the insight of how the love and support of family is at the very core of Hunter.

How did swimming become his thing? Growing up his older brother, Jake, was on the YMCA Silver Streaks swim team and his mom and his mom was an assistant coach. Hunter tagged along always looking up to his big brother. Coach Brenda Wherley saw that Hunter had some good abilities so Hunter joined the team at age 6.

He actually wasn't all that good as he was one of the smallest kids on the team. Although he did win in the 25 yard backstroke meet at league championship.

Jake developed early and was swimming great and winning his events while Hunter was just a little guy and doing just fine, but nothing too spectacular. This didn't bother Hunter... he was proud of his brother. Other sports like football and basketball were something Hunter tried, but swimming was where he felt his best.

His coach Brenda always encouraged him. She was the one who got him started to swim so when he started to be discouraged with the sport in middle school she implored him to stick it out. She urged him to wait until he's in high school. He had ability, he just needed to build his strength and technique.

As he entered into his junior year of high school, Hunter decided to compete Long Course and that took him to the Canton City Schools (CCS) summer league. There the training took him to another level. He was getting faster and started to be noticed. His senior year, 6 of the top 10 schools wanted to recruit him.

It wasn't until the summer of 2018 his swimming club took a trip to Ft. Lauderdale where he realized what could be possible. He went all in dedicating himself to this sort.

Hunter graduated from Dover High School in 2019 and followed his brother to West Virginia University. Not a partier he focused on his swimming. He qualified as a freshman in the NCAA top 20 in the country. While at the NCAA's championship swim meet, one of the most famous swimming coaches, Eddie Reese, from Texas with the #1 best team in the country went out of his way to speak to Hunter telling him he's one of the best backstrokers he has seen.

The confidence and the swimmer's ability only grew better.

Then Covid came.

West Virginia is not an elite school for swimming. The culture changed there so Hunter decided to come home.

Actually this was to his advantage.

He entered the NCAA portal where he could attend a different school. The phone started ringing with new opportunities for him. With his grandmother's influence he chose OSU and is now a Buckeye.

With Covid the swimmers stayed in a bubble. So what else could he do but train hard... lifting heavy and swimming.

His first meet in Indianapolis Hunter swam backstroke in the 100 meter long course. He starts the race and wins... beating everyone with the 5th fastest time in the world.

For the Olympic trials he came in 2nd place swimming against Ryan Murphy, the world record holder (who is 27 years old).

Hunter had no site on the Olympics... he just wanted the experience and wanted to make in the top 6th which would put him on the national team for the following year. It was a high pressure and emotional meet. When he trounced his personal best time at the PProSwim Series in Indianapolis an

Olympic berth seemed plausible. He felt a trip to Tokyo could be possible but unlikely... his parents had to be the ones to break the great news that's it much more than that. Their belief in him and support for him never stopped.

Hunter said he didn't want to believe he even had a shot because he'd be disappointed.

Armstrong swam strong, setting his best times every time out so there was no doubt he'd be representing...Dover...OSU...USA in the topmost swimming program in the world at the Olympics

After qualifying for the Olympics he then had to train for 3 weeks in Hawaii to adjust to the time change for Tokyo. That wasn't too much of a disappointment.

In August 2020 at the Aquatics Cenetr in Tokyo Hunter swam the backstroke leg of the mens 4x100 medley relay on the final day of competition. He and his teammates won a gold medal.

Hunter has numerous achievements and honors in his swimming career with much more to come and for us to watch for.

And throughout al this hoopla and recognition he has remained humble and grounded, wanting to set good examples for future athletes.

One last notation I'd like to comment about is that Hunter is recognized as the magician.. The "Magic Man" with his card playing tricks.

Instead of the coaches at the Olympics announcing who the captain of the teams would be... they allowed Hunter to use his card tricks.

Let's look forward to his magic that's to come in the 2024 Olympics in Paris!