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## Local Residents Participate in Annual Congo Swim

*Fundraiser benefits sexual abuse victims of the Congo, raises awareness**Submitted by Bobbie Dodson*

Survivor Coco Ramazani gives Keris Dahlkamp a congratulatory hug at the completion of his 22-mile swim. Photo provided

him hot water for core warmth, roasted potatoes for calories, salt capsules, regular water, and extra nutritious Clif Shot Blok bars for endurance. She continues, "I jumped in the water and swam for a while. It gave me total respect for the 'real' swimmers who paced him for two hours at a time. They began at 6 a.m. and the first in the water was the niece of Orindans Melissa and Gareth Creasey, Lonie Harris, who came from London to join the team.

A touching moment came when, sitting in the pilot boat, Coco Ramazani, a survivor of sexual abuse in Congo, wrote on a rock words about what she had endured then threw the rock into the water as a way of releasing her pain.

Rena, Dahlkamp's wife, was in one of the support team kayaks. Their two children Rio, 7, and Magdalena, 5, watched their dad take off near midnight, rode on the pilot boat for a while, and were at the shore at King's Beach to greet him.

Dahlkamp's mother, Maria Rosales, who swam a short distance with her son in the chilly waters of Tahoe, said, "It gives me goose bumps to think of the memories my grandchildren will have of the Congo Swim. Certainly they will be proud of what their father accomplished for the very needy in the Congo.

"Hundreds of thousands of women and children in eastern Congo have endured sexual violence. It is a tragedy of epic proportions," Rosales explained.

For more information, visit [www.congoswim.org](http://www.congoswim.org). "Tell This to My Mother" by Joseph E. Mwantuali, is based on Coco Ramazani's true story and available through Amazon Books.

Canyon resident Keris Dahlkamp cites as his reason for establishing the Congo Swim, which raised funds for Friends of The Congo and Global Fund for Women, "If it were my wife, mother or daughter being violated, I would hope that those who could do something would do something. " He went on to say, "We must launch out into the deep. Please join me."

And join they did - to do something about this humanitarian crisis. Swimmers from all over the world participated in the Congo Swim, from swimming laps in a community pool to joining Dahlkamp in Lake Tahoe. The ministerial staff of Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church, Peter Whitelock, Judy Durff and Gerald Chinen added to the effort. Dahlkamp's personal commitment was to swim the length of Lake Tahoe, 22 miles, which he accomplished in 14 hours.

A pilot boat and two kayaks accompanied Dahlkamp from the time he entered the water shortly after midnight. Because of a shoulder injury, he swam the first eight miles only kicking to maintain his shoulder strength for the last part of the event. The strategy worked, though nearly was compromised when a curious couple paddled their kayak toward the swimmer; were overwhelmed by the power of the waves; were unable to stop; and bumped into Dahlkamp's head. Fortunately, he was unhurt and a few yards later he waded ashore at Kings Beach, arms held high in triumph, where he was engulfed by well-wishers.

Carolyn Bauer, who was aboard the pilot boat, explained how they kept in close contact with Dahlkamp, monitoring his condition and what he should eat. "We gave

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