

Utah man eyes record-breaking swim across Lake Tahoe

By Melinda Rogers, Salt Lake Tribune

James Jonsson grew up on the shores of Hawaii, where he fell in love with long distance swimming during ocean workouts.

When a job change brought him to Utah 17 years ago, he kept his passion for marathon swimming alive in the state's lakes and creeks.

The 48-year-old South Jordan man's competitive drive led him to tackle a 19-mile swim across Bear Lake last summer, when he set a new record of 8 hours 53 minutes –the fastest time known for crossing the lake's aquamarine waters.

Now, Jonsson has his sights set on another swim: a 21-mile trek across Lake Tahoe next summer. Only 17 people have managed the feat, which is especially challenging because of Lake Tahoe's altitude and cool waters.

This time, Jonsson wants to do the swim for charity.

He'll be swimming the length of Lake Tahoe to promote organ donation, a cause close to his heart for two reasons.

His father received a life-saving kidney transplant in the mid-1980s. And in 2003, he watched his 8-year-old son's organs save the lives of several people, after the boy choked to death as a result of a birth defect that created problems with his esophagus.

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