

Engaging the Community in a Water Safety Program

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Objectives

- To identify techniques to win community support for a cause
- To learn effective ways to use community resources
- To address ways to confront and adjust to challenges

Our Program

In 4 years, a new program in Memphis has provided:



- 3,000 “at-risk” children with free swim lessons
- 50 children with competitive swim team scholarships
- 130 lifeguards with additional training
- 450 adults with free CPR training

Background

- Le Bonheur Children's treats nearly 40 children each year as a result of drowning or submersion injury.
- Memphis City Aquatics Centers opened in 2008-
Two youth drowned on the same day.
- The Community was outraged!
- We issued a timely Call to Action. More than 35 organizations concerned about the safety of children came together with the goal of helping area children be safe in and around water.



Research

- Research about minority swim participation was conducted in April 2008 by the University of Memphis, commissioned by USA Swimming.
- The study was the first of its kind.
- Researchers surveyed children and parents in six markets, including Memphis.



*“Constraints Impacting Minority Swimming
Irwin, R., Drayer, J., Irwin, C., Ryan, T., Southall, R.; April*

Research

- Nearly 60 % of African American children are unable to swim, nearly twice as many as their Caucasian counterparts.
- 56 % of Hispanic and Latino children cannot swim.
- The youth drowning rate in ethnically-diverse communities is two to three times higher than the national average.
- Children whose parents are non-swimmers are typically not encouraged to learn to swim.
- One of the variables found to decrease the chances a child would be at risk is the familiarity with a highly competitive swimmer.

Forming Our Solution

Issues

- **Water safety in public and private bodies of water**
- **Access to affordable lessons**
- **Inadequate “active” water supervision**
- Decreased enrollment in swim classes
- Children cannot swim
- Availability of safety information
- Complacency around water
- Inadequate supervision of lifeguards
- Decreased number of trained lifeguards
- Lifeguards often young, inexperienced
- Poor pay for lifeguards
- Many open bodies of water
- Number of lifeguards vs. the number of swimmers
- Perceived lack of parental enthusiasm for swimming



Forming Our Solution

SPLASH

Mid-South

Forming Our Solution

Swim clinics and meets

Developmental teams

Swim lessons

Lifeguard training

CPR

Water safety instruction

Forming Our Solution

The Major Players:

- Safe Kids Mid-South
- Le Bonheur Children's Hospital
- Memphis Pool
- Municipalities
- YMCAs
- Red Cross
- University of Memphis
- USA Swim Clubs
- Olympic and Collegiate Level Swimmers

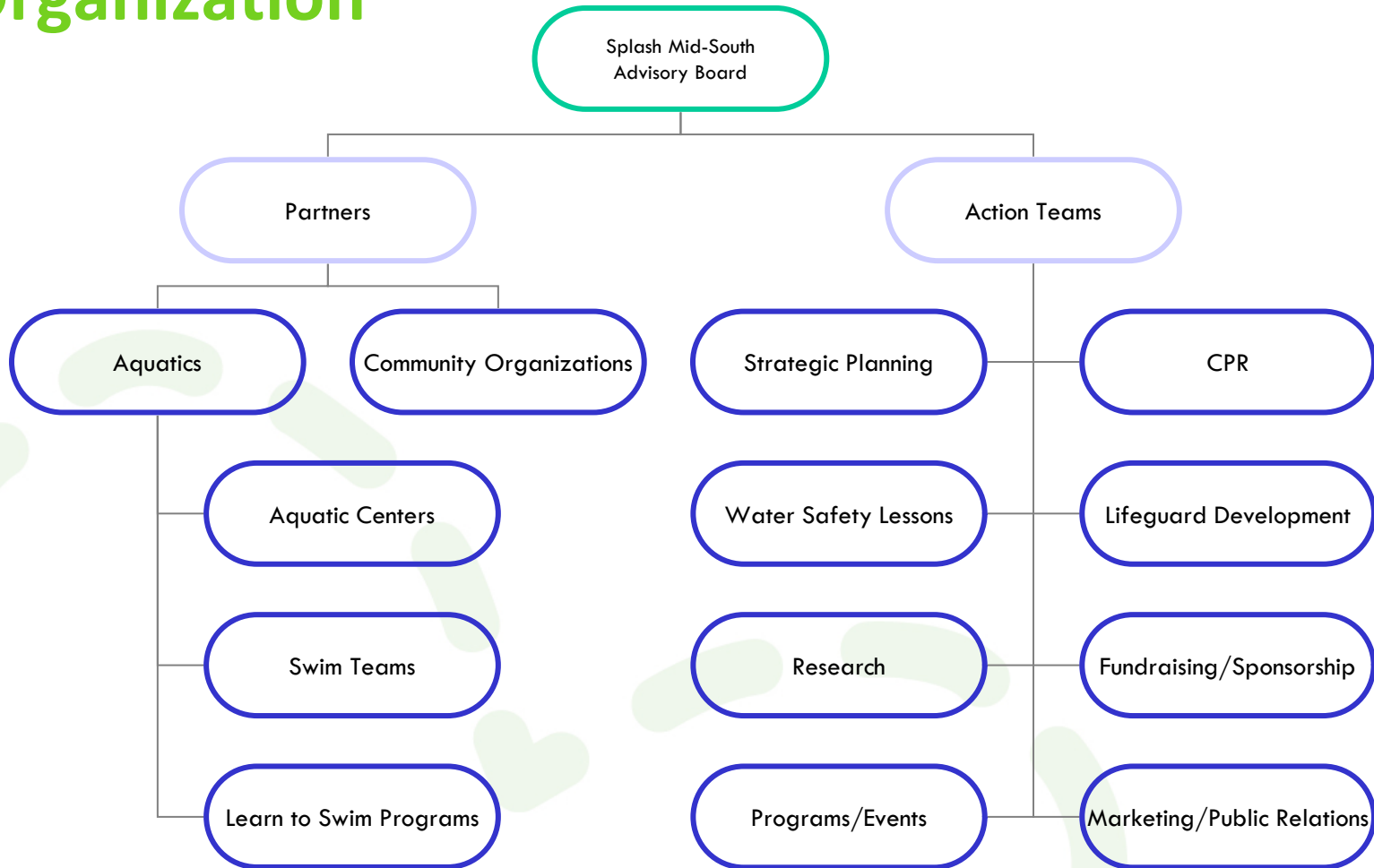


Benefits of Partnership

- Access to grants
- Support of outreach efforts
- Scholarship funds for promising swimmers
- Participation in research conducted by the University of Memphis about minority participation in swimming lessons



Organization



Original Goals

- Raise funds to provide 30 **Free Swim Lessons** for “at-risk” children in the first year of the program. Provide swim suits, goggles and towels as needed.
- Encourage diversity in swimming by hosting a **Developmental Clinic** with 100 participants.
- Supplement Lifeguard Training initiatives by hosting **Lifeguard Games**.
- Host Family and Friends CPR Days for the community.

Free Swimming Lessons

- In February 2009, we piloted the free swim lessons with 10 children. This allowed us to expand the program slowly to work out any kinks. We partnered with city pools to offer the lessons. We paid a discounted rate per child.
- Lessons were continued in the Summer and Fall 2009 for 90 additional “at-risk” children.



Free Swim Lessons Program

- Families apply on our web site
- Free School Lunch Program is a requirement
- Promoted with a clinic hosted by Olympic Swimmers
- Information is handed over to aquatic centers
- 5 sites are utilized
- \$25 provides 2 weeks of instruction
- Each aquatic center handles the specifics



Open House Model

- Host Swim Clinic/ Open House led by Olympic swimmers Gil Stovall and Julia Stowers and local college swimmers
- Utilize *slightly* older, more experienced swimmers to help children get comfortable in water
- Offer as many as 50 children, 6 months of swim lessons at free or at low-cost to parents
- Recruit children from schools near pools



Advanced Swimmers

- **Memphis Tiger Swimming**
Awarded scholarships
- **City Aquatic Centers**
Developed competitive swimmer and enhanced lifeguard training programs
- **Two high schools**
Formed swim teams
- 50 youth formed **Memphis Splash**
Multicultural Developmental Swim Program which includes Memphis Splash Team



“I Have a Dream... Diversity in Swimming” Meet

Hosted by **Memphis Tiger Swimming**
at the **University of Memphis**

- Weekend Meet, March 2009
 - 120 competitive swimmers
 - 80 novice swimmers
 - 40 mentors
 - 80 volunteers

THE UNIVERSITY OF
MEMPHIS

MEMPHIS
Tigers
SWIMMING
Memphis Tiger Swimming



Diversity Meet & Developmental Clinic

- On March 28- 29, 2009, we held a Diversity in Swimming Weekend at the local university's aquatic center, attracting 200 children from the region, 80 area volunteers to assist and several elected officials serving as timekeepers.
- This initiative included morning sanctioned swim meets, one afternoon clinic for new and beginning swimmers paired with seasoned swimmer peers, and one afternoon opportunity for the new swimmers to participate in a “swim meet”.



- Elected Officials were our timekeepers at the Diversity Meet to bring prominence to the event and to ensure that water safety remained a priority for these leaders.
- Research shows children are less likely to drown if they know an experienced swimmer. At the Developmental Clinic, inexperienced swimmers were paired with children who participate on swim teams. When a young swimmer was having trouble making it across the pool, an older swimmer jumped in to help the child across.
- All New Swimmers received a ribbon for each event.



Lifeguard Games



In July 2009, more than 40 lifeguards from the Mid-South participated in the Lifeguard Games. The event was designed to provide community lifeguards with additional training in responding to real aquatic and medical emergencies.

Lifeguard Games

Lifeguards were given the opportunity to train and compete as a team so that the public will benefit from well-trained, skilled and motivated lifeguards:

- swimming 25 yards carrying an unresponsive victim
- recovering a 10 pound diving brick
- accurately tossing a ring buoy
- performing CPR



CPR Training

- Annual event
- 150 attendees per event
- Volunteer trainers from multiple organizations
- Held at local church with space to spread out



Building Awareness

- In March 2009, we partnered with local media. We developed a relationship with *Commercial Appeal* columnist Wendi Thomas. She says she often cites Make a Splash Mid-South as a group that saw a problem and is working to make Memphis better.
- We continue to be the “go-to” experts on water safety issues.



Securing Resources

- Community partnerships allowed Splash Mid-South to extend free swim lessons to more children than originally expected. Partners involved donated resources and time (i.e., Le Bonheur Nurses hosted Jeans Days!)
- Low income and lack of parental involvement can be barriers for children's participation. Forming partnerships with child care and community centers allowed for swim lessons to a group of children at one time.

Securing Resources

- Small grant funds were awarded
- Individual and corporate donations were received
- Splash Mid-South birthday parties were encouraged
- Swim suit, goggles and towel donations were encouraged
- In 4 years, we raised over \$60,000 and a host of swim supplies!

Results

- An active community-wide coalition with more than 35 groups interested in children's safety was developed
- 3,000 “at-risk” children received free swim lessons
- 600 participated in Diversity in Swimming Days, 100’s of volunteers
- 150 Lifeguards competed in the Lifeguard Games
- 450 are CPR trained



More Results

- African American adults have expressed interest in expanding the program to adults. They have been inspired by the children's enthusiasm.
- Adults who know how to swim decrease the likelihood that children will be at risk for drowning. We have connected these adults to swimming lessons currently offered in the community.

Next Steps

- Secure additional funding to expand free swim lessons to more “at-risk” children
- Increase diversity in swimming by hosting an annual developmental swim clinic, providing additional scholarships and lifeguard training
- Incorporate water safety instruction in local schools



By 2015

- Teach 3,000 more “at-risk” youth to swim
- Enroll 100 more “at-risk” youth on recreational/developmental swim teams
- Enroll 50 more “at-risk” youth on competitive swim teams



Lessons Learned

Strong community partnerships and individuals passionate about a cause can offer an inexpensive and well-crafted solution to a community problem.



SPLASH

Mid-South

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SAFE
KIDS
MID-SOUTH

Le Bonheur
Methodist Healthcare Family Children's Hospital



Engaging the Community in a Water Safety Program

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Background

- Le Bonheur Children's Hospital (Memphis) treats nearly 40 children each year as a result of a drowning or a submersion injury.
- Memphis City Aquatics Centers opened on June 1, 2008. Two teens drowned that same day.
- The community was outraged!
- We issued a Call to Action. More than 35 organizations came together with the goal of helping area children be safe in and around the water.
- We became Splash Mid-South.

Research

- The University of Memphis, commissioned by USA Swimming, conducted research about minority swim participation in April 2008. Researchers surveyed children and parents in six markets, including Memphis.
- Findings included that nearly 60 percent of African American children are unable to swim, nearly twice that of their Caucasian counterparts.
- 56 percent of Hispanic and Latino children are unable to swim.
- The youth drowning rate in ethnically-diverse communities is two to three times higher than the national average.
- Children whose parents are non-swimmers are typically not encouraged to swim.
- One of the variables found to decrease the chance a child would be at-risk for drowning is the familiarity with a highly competitive swimmer.

Identified Top Issues

- Water safety in public and private bodies of water
- Affordable swim lessons
- Active water supervision

Created Goals

- Raise funds to provide **Free Swim Lessons** for at-risk children. Provide swim suits, goggles and towels as needed.
- Encourage diversity in swimming by hosting an annual **Developmental Clinic & Meet**.
- Supplement lifeguard training initiatives by hosting **Lifeguard Games** to enhance lifeguard skills.
- Provide Community CPR training.

Raised Funds

- Since 2009, provided 3,000 **Free Swim Lessons** for at-risk children. We have partnered with city pools and pay a discounted rate per child.
- Hosted annual **Diversity Swimming Meet and Developmental Clinics** at the University of Memphis Aquatic Center, attracting 800 children from the region and 100's of community volunteers.
- More than 150 lifeguards have participated in **Lifeguard Games** who completed in teams responding to simulated aquatic and medical emergencies.
- Trained 450 in CPR.

Effective Use of Resources

- Community partnerships allowed Splash Mid-South to extend free swim lessons to more children than originally anticipated.
- Low income and lack of parental involvement can be barriers for children's participation. Forming partnerships with child care and community centers allowed for swim lessons to a group of children at one time.
- Small grants were awarded.
- Individual and corporate donations were received.
- Splash Mid-South birthday parties were held.
- Swim suit, goggles and towel donations were encouraged.
- In 4 years, we raised \$ 60,000 and a host of swim supplies!

Results

- An active community-wide coalition with more than 35 groups interested in children's safety was developed.
- 3,000 at-risk children have received free swim lessons.
- Memphis Tiger Swim Team Scholarships were awarded to those would not have been previously had the opportunity available to them.
- 50 youth formed Memphis Splash Multicultural and Developmental Swim Program which includes the Memphis Splash Swim Team.
- 800 have participated in the Diversity in Swimming weekends, 100's of community volunteers have assisted.
- African American adults have expressed an interest in expanding the program to adults. We connected them to swimming lessons offered in the community.
- 150 Lifeguards are trained.
- 450 are CPR trained.
- Media coverage has been exceptional. A public relations VOX (Voices) Award was received (2009).
- A Community Lifesaver Award was received from the National Drowning Prevention Alliance (2010).
- A Cullen Jones Day was awarded by USAA Swimming and Phillips 66 (2012).

Next Steps

- Secure additional funds to expand the free swim lesson program
- Increase diversity in swimming by hosting developmental swim clinics, providing additional swim team scholarships and lifeguard training
- Incorporate water safety instruction in local schools
- Provide annual Family and Friends CPR Days for the community

For Additional Information

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