

2007 World Leadership Award
Category: Education and Development of the Young
Entrant: The City of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada
Project: Swim to Survive Program



Swim to Survive Program

The City of Mississauga and Ontario Lifesaving Society Partnership

BACKGROUND

The City of Mississauga, Ontario, Canada -- a city of more than 700,000 people -- has regularly invested in renewal of infrastructure, programs and people. The city is very diverse: 41.8% of the population speak a mother tongue other than English and French (official languages) and 40.3% represent a visible minority. (Source: 2001 Census)

The origin of the Swim to Survive Program began with Barb Underhill, a Mississauga resident and World Pairs Figure Skating champion. Barbara was concerned with news that a 9-year-old had drowned in Toronto, and that this family (who were new Canadians) did not know how to swim, assist in the rescue, or to dial 911.

Barb Underhill had previously experienced personal tragedy with the drowning death of her own daughter which made her determined to do something. More children die every year from injuries and incidents than disease and accordingly, Barb and her husband established the Stephanie Gaetz KEEPSAFE Foundation.

Barb was motivated to seek out the assistance of the Ontario Lifesaving Society and Mississauga's Director of Recreation and Parks to gain support for what could be done. An impromptu meeting at a Mississauga hockey arena dressing room after a fall 2004 celebration of a newly-renovated community centre took place involving Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion, Barb Underhill, and John Lohuis, the Director of Recreation & Parks for the city.

Mayor McCallion had skated along with Barb Underhill and completed a public appearance for the newly renovated Huron Park Recreation Centre. It was at this time that Barb Underhill proposed a powerful idea that needed nurturing.

THE CHALLENGE

By losing a young twin daughter to drowning, Barb wanted to bring forward an idea to reach out to as many people as possible to teach them how not to drown. The idea was to quickly and economically develop a model that could be used universally to allow people to learn to survive in water.

THE OBSTACLE

Barb and staff from the City of Mississauga and the Ontario Lifesaving Society discussed how in many cultures, recreational use of water is a foreign experience, and that combined with the inability to afford multiple swimming lessons, many families never learn how to survive in water.

THE LEADERSHIP

The Mayor supported city staff to work with Barb Underhill to promote this idea into more aggressive life-saving efforts. The Director of Recreation & Parks then promoted the effort to have Juanita Bueschleb, Aquatics Supervisor with the city's aquatics staff, to review potential options with the Ontario Lifesaving Society about how a new model for swimming survival could be developed and promoted further. Barb Underhill, through the Stephanie Gaetz KEEPSAFE Foundation, pledged an initial \$100,000 to get efforts going.

THE INNOVATION

With membership in the Ontario Lifesaving Society, Juanita Bueschleb, a prominent city aquatics supervisor, knew that every community in Canada still faced continuing challenges in the threat of drowning. Across Ontario, many people drown in car accidents in water, slip into water near docks while fishing or floating in creeks and rivers, or even walking near water and find themselves in trouble. Each year in Canada's largest province, over 130 people die from drowning, over 400 each year in Canada. Drowning is the 2nd leading cause of accidental deaths in Canada for those under the age of 60. Only 40% of school-aged children participate in swimming lessons.

In the City of Mississauga, we believed that extra steps were necessary to provide capacity to help people save themselves if ever they entered water unexpectedly given our very diverse and multicultural population. So, in working with the Ontario Lifesaving Society, groundbreaking and innovative methods were constructed to more readily introduce people to water and, in a short timeframe, provide them with skills to save themselves in water.

In 2000, the Lifesaving Society issued its Canadian Swim to Survive standard position statement, and in 2005, aquatic instructors and technical experts in lifesaving were consulted. The City of Mississauga was the initial city that brought the concept forward for testing. The pilot year involved building the program with community sponsorships and the support of the Ontario Lifesaving Society. Testing of key program elements took place. During the summer of 2005, over 10,000 Mississauga children were provided free opportunities to learn these skills while participating in numerous day-camping, adventure skill and arts/culture programmes during the summer.

Since the pilot began, over 119,178 participants have formally completed the Swim to Survive Program. School Boards all across Ontario are now mobilizing Grade 3 students to support the program in formal teaching curricula. The result is a model that can be easily implemented and replicated.

A MODEL PROGRAM

The elements of the Swim to Survive Program included the development of standards:

Swim to Survive Standard -- Essential Life Skills Task

- Orient oneself at the surface after an unexpected entry
 - Roll into water
- Support oneself at the surface
 - Tread water for 1 minute
- Swim to safety
 - Swim for 50 metres

Flexible and simple to provide, Swim to Survive can meet even the tightest time frames and budget. Swim to Survive can be applied in many varying settings including:

- Basic survival training for every family member
- Meeting educational physical education requirements
- Workplace safety training
- Youth group recreational and training needs
- Screening for outdoor activities such as canoeing and boating
- Programming at community pools

Swim to Survive's flexibility and simple design make this an ideal program for camps, school and youth groups. Youth groups are in an excellent position to make a difference by adding Swim to Survive into their regular programming.

The Swim to Survive Activity Guide was developed to support families, youth groups and school teachers who want to offer Swim to Survive. The activity guide provides easy to follow lesson plans to guide leaders in teaching swim to survive skills.

Leaders can include making water smart choices in their lessons. The Water Smart Activities Guide* provides interactive and fun activities that teach people to make better, safer choices when playing or working in, on, or around water and ice.

CONCLUSION

Through **Swim to Survive**, everyone has the opportunity to learn how to protect themselves. A recent Lifesaving Society study indicated that 60% of Canadian children don't take swimming lessons. For some children participating in Swim to Survive, it may be their first step to being safe around water.

Like fire safety and bike safety, everyone deserves to learn the life skills that Swim to Survive provides; vital skills necessary to survive an unexpected fall into deep water. In Mississauga, the leadership of the Mayor, the aquatics staff and the support of the Lifesaving Society has made a difference in the lives of the 119,178 participants who have participated in the Swim to Survive Program.

Swim to Survive™ Program History

2000	Lifesaving Society issues its Canadian Swim to Survive™ Standard Position Statement
2000 – present	Lifesaving Society promotes Swim to Survive™ standard to Lifesaving Society Affiliate Members
July 2004	Stephanie Gaetz KEEPSAFE Foundation approaches Lifesaving Society to assist in providing a way for all children to receive swimming lessons
August – Feb. 2005	Ontario Branch develops program Swim to Survive™ program with companion Activity Guide, parent handout and poster
Feb. – March 2005	City of Mississauga offers to pilot the program and develops partnership with the Peel Board of Education
March – June 2005	Swim to Survive™ Pilot program launched at City of Mississauga
June 16, 2005	Official program launch in City of Toronto
August 25, 2005	Meeting with the Ministry of Education
December 15, 2005	Ministry of Education requests Swim to Survive School program cost projections
March 30, 2006	Ministry of Education donates over \$900,000 for the implementation of the Swim to Survive School program across the province of Ontario
May 15 – 19, 2006	Province wide media tour to announce Ministry's funding

July 14, 2006	1st round of applications for the Swim to Survive School program are accepted (2006/2007 school year)
August 21, 2006	9 applications are approved to reach 11,195 school children
October 31, 2006	2nd round of applications for the Swim to Survive School program are accepted (2006/2007 school year)
November 25, 2006	26 applications are approved to reach 20,203 school children
January 31, 2007	3rd round of applications for the Swim to Survive School program are accepted (2006/2007 school year)
February 28, 2007	14 applications are approved to reach 14,057 school children
March 30, 2007	Ministry of Education continues to support the Swim to Survive School program and donates an additional \$900,000
May 17, 2007	Media announcement of Ministry's funding and success of program
May 31, 2007	4 th round of applications for the Swim to Survive School program are accepted (2007/2008 school year)
July 20, 2007	22 applications are approved to reach 37,831 school children (2007/2008 school year)



Swim to Survive™ Statistics

Year	School Program Numbers	Community Program Numbers	Total
2005		19,000*	19,000
2006	(Please see below)	12,200	12,200
2007	45,455 (2006/2007 school year)	4,692 (to date)	50,147
2008	37,831 (2007/2008 school year)		37,831
Grand total of children reached to date			119,178

* Includes the pilot in Mississauga: 20 groups of children with an average success rate of 75%. 10,000 children participated in the pilot.

Swim to Survive™ Partnerships

Lifesaving Society

- Developed the Swim to Survive Standard
- Developed the Swim to Survive program
- Developed the Swim to Survive Activity Guide and certificate
- Developed the Swim to Survive 2-page parent handout
- Developed the Swim to Survive poster and camera-ready art
- Trained all instructors of the Swim to Survive program for the pilot program
- Developed the communication materials for the launch in conjunction with Praxis Public Relations
- Offered the program free-of-charge to any affiliate or instructor

Stephanie Gaetz KEEPSAFE FOUNDATION

- Founding sponsor of the Swim to Survive Program
- Participant in the Swim to Survive launch and one of the principal spokespersons for media interviews

City of Mississauga

- Pilot centre for the Swim to Survive program
- Established partnership with Peel School Board
- Established partnerships with local Mississauga schools

DRAFT Canada

- Sponsored the development costs for the Swim to Survive program and communication materials, as part of pro-bono relationship with the Lifesaving Society

Ministry of Education

- Sponsored over \$1.8 million to implement the Swim to Survive School Grant program across the province of Ontario to grade 3 school children

Ministry of Health Promotion (ACTIVE 2010)

- Sponsored \$100,000 to assist in the implementation of the Swim to Survive School Grant program across the province of Ontario to grade 3 school children

Community Groups

- In the 2006/2007 school year, over \$668,422 was sponsored by various community groups from across the province to assist in the implementation of the Swim to Survive School Grant program.

Lifesaving Society History

Swimming was very popular in the United Kingdom and Europe during the 1880's. Many clubs were actively teaching swimming. Some swimmers made a good living as professional racers and by exhibiting their skills. However, very little attention was paid to the development or instruction of lifesaving with the result that drowning was a common form of death.

William Henry was a renowned English and European swimming champion throughout the 1880's and 1890's. He won the World Life Saving Championship in Paris in 1890.

Recognizing the need to develop and teach lifesaving, William Henry approached the Royal Humane Society to develop a lifesaving program. On January 3, 1891, a founding meeting of 60 people was held to create an organization to address this concern. A committee of 12 lead by William Henry and Archibald Sinclair was appointed to create the rules for the "Swimmers Life Saving Society". The Society's name was later changed to the "Life Saving Society". The first lecture sponsored by the new Life Saving Society was delivered on May 25, 1891 by the famous doctor Sir Andrew Clark, personal physician to the Prime Minister, William Gladstone.

The techniques for resuscitation skills were adapted from the program of the Royal Humane Society. The lifesaving skills and instruction methods had to be developed from scratch. A common teaching method of the 1890's was based on drills, many of which were demonstrated and practiced on land. The first handbook of drills was developed by William Wilson with Sir Andrew Clark and Dr. W. Collingridge.

William Henry died on March 20, 1928 after almost 40 years dedicated to the development of lifesaving.

1891 the "Swimmers Life Saving Society" is formed in England by William Henry for the purpose of providing lifesaving training to reduce the number of drownings. This was later changed to the "Life Saving Society".

1892 The Bronze Medallion award is established. Thirty lifesaving rescues are documented; 16 rescues by members of the Life Saving Society.

1893 HRH the Duke of York, later King George V, became president of the Life Saving Society, beginning a close association with the Royal Family that continues to this day.

1894 A.L. Cochrane is made Honorary Representative of the Society in Canada.

1896 First Bronze Medallion awards are issued in Canada. The Diploma award is established.

1908 The first branch in Canada (the Ontario Branch) is formed. It is directly affiliated with the parent Society in England. The Award of Merit is established.

1909 The Quebec Branch established.

1910 Saskatchewan and Manitoba Branches are established.

1924 The Society receives its formal Royal Charter from King George V as "The Royal Life Saving Society".

1926 The Alberta Branch of The Royal Life Saving Society is established.

1943 The RLSSC requests that the Canadian Red Cross Society establish the Water Safety Service. The service is developed and established with the assistance of the RLSSC.

1945 The Bronze Cross award is established.

1947 The Canadian Council of Branches is created with the power to issue awards in Canada and adapt the RLSS program to Canadian needs.

1955 RLSS was reorganized into 5 independent self-governing branches coordinated by the Commonwealth Council of National Branches. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom are the 5 branches.

1960 Rescue Breathing - RLSSC becomes the first National organization to teach the direct method (mouth to mouth) of artificial respiration. Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia Branches established.

1963 The National Lifeguard Service is established. This is the beginning of an approach to lifeguard standards and training which establishes the RLSSC as the leading world life guarding expert. The Canadian Lifesaving Program is launched as the comprehensive national lifesaving program with consistent national content and standards.

1965 The first edition of the Canadian Life Saving Manual is published. The five year revisions cycle is implemented.

1966 The Distinction award is created.

1967 The Alberta Branch assumes responsibility for the Territories and becomes the Alberta and Territories Branch.

1969 The New Brunswick and Newfoundland Branches are established.

1973 The British Columbia Branch assumes responsibility for the Yukon Territory and becomes the British Columbia & Yukon Branch. The Alberta and Territories changes its name to Alberta & Northwest Territories Branch.

1986 Rescue 86 is hosted in Vancouver by the BC & Yukon Branch. This international symposium and lifeguard competition highlights RLSSC's leadership in the world lifesaving community. This event is the beginning of a biannual international symposium and lifesaving competition hosted throughout the commonwealth. Rescue 96 is hosted by Durban, South Africa.

1991 The RLSS Centennial and Revision year. This is the last year that the Award of Merit is offered. CPR skills become a standard component of the Canadian Lifesaving Program.

1995 The new visual identity of the LIFESAVING SOCIETY is introduced. This trademark is introduced to help the public to recognize and remember the mission of the Royal Life Saving Society Canada.

1996 The Centennial of the Bronze Medallion award in Canada.

1999 New Canadian Swim Patrol and Bronze Star awards are launched. These programs target young lifesavers and are the "On-ramp to Life guarding".

2000 Two new programs targeting the First Responder market are introduced in Alberta. The new programs are Swiftwater Rescue and Boat Rescue for First Responders.

Lifesaving Society programs and awards are now delivered in over 50 countries throughout the world. The LIFESAVING SOCIETY is a leading member of the International Life Saving Federation, an association of national lifesaving organizations from around the world.