

MEDIA ADVISORY



Darfield School Pupils Really Do Learn To Swim

Background

In Darfield this Wednesday a class of primary school students will undergo their first “make up” swimming lesson for the summer season!

Darfield Primary students are not only fortunate enough to get the opportunity to Learn to Swim, but they also get the chance to make up lessons or raise their level of ability to desired standards.

Teacher Helen Creamer has been organising the classes for several years with the help of Dental Nurse Christina Clarkson and latterly another teacher Mary Dalzell, as she believes all students should have the opportunity to develop the core life skill of swim and survive. The classes give students the opportunity to raise their levels of confidence and ability in the water. Something that is paramount to a community that recreates in, on or around water, all year round.

As a core life skill, swimming is the key determinant action in the education setting for reducing drownings. The ability to swim and survive is not inherent in all New Zealand children, nor is a programme to ensure their ability to swim at school.

Although Darfield parents can never rest easy with children around water, they can take great satisfaction in the knowledge that their children will be able to make safer decisions around water in the future.

The fact that a large number of schools in New Zealand do not have a Learn to Swim programme is disheartening. Thankfully schools like Darfield Primary School are ensuring their pupils have a positive aquatic experience by offering an envious teaching and learning model. They also support it in much the same fashion as remedial classes by identifying students with specific needs.

Facts

Learning to swim has not been compulsory in New Zealand schools for many years.

Drowning is a **major cause of accidental death** in New Zealand.

Quotes

Water Safety New Zealand Executive Director, Alan Muir, says New Zealand has double the number of drownings per capita than Australia.

“Drowning has always been known as The New Zealand Death,” says Muir, “Even though drowning deaths have reduced by 46% in the past 20 years it is still far too high. On average 124 people lose their lives to the water in this country, at a huge social cost to families, friends, and whanau.”

Supporting Information

Swim For Life is but one example of a marketing intervention that aims to further reduce drowning deaths.

Swim For Life is a marketing initiative focussed on getting New Zealand children back in the water and learning to swim. Ideally children receive this tuition at school, but fundamental to the programme is the acknowledgement that less than 25% of New Zealand children can swim 200 metres by the age of 12...some might say not far enough to save themselves.

Water Safety New Zealand and Sport Canterbury are actively promoting Swim For Life in the Canterbury Region. Sport Canterbury have facilitated professional development for all interested school teachers and have been a key player in ensuring Swim For Life has a positive impact in the local community.

Swim For Life works to ensure the barriers to learning to swim are knocked over and builds awareness by promoting positive and encouraging activity in the community.

Ends

519 words

Photo opportunity with Helen Creamer and students:

Darfield Indoor Pool
Ross St (beside Darfield School)
Darfield
1:30 pm, Wednesday 16th November, 2005

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