



1 Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, CO
80909-5770
o 719.866.4578
f 719.866.4669
usaswimming.org

FROM: Mick Nelson, Facilities Development Director - USA Swimming

USA SWIMMING WANTS TO HELP SAVE POOLS

BY TURNING POOLS INTO SELF-SUSTAINING AQUATIC CENTERS

Every wave starts with a ripple. USA Swimming uses the metaphor of ripples being the start of good things in aquatic programs. Waves can be fun and waves can be dangerous. What happens when the tidal wave of pool closing comes to your city? This has been happening all over the country for the past 3 years. The result is that swimming professionals lose their job, including aquatic fitness instructors, swimming instructors, lifeguards, swimming coaches and aquatic directors. All of the individuals that it takes to operate a successful aquatic center for your community will be out of work.

Many USA Swimming's clubs depend on community pools for their training. Swim lesson programs that teach children a valuable lifesaving skill depend on community pools. Adult aquatic exercise programs that improve quality of life depend on community pools. These pools are essential.

A misnomer is going around. The rumor is that pools cannot be self-sustaining. USA Swimming believes just the opposite. For the last 7 years USA Swimming has been increasing the awareness that it is possible for pools to operate at a breakeven level or even a profit. Pools can no longer be considered "just pools" but need to be looked at as a community necessity to promote safety, health and wellness.

We cannot keep trying to operate pools like we are in the 1960's. We must develop and implement a plan so pools can stand on their own financially in today's market. USA Swimming would like the opportunity to present an alternative method of operations to the city management who have the difficult task of telling their community "your pool or pools" may be closing.

Small and big cities alike have been operating their pools at a deficit, in some cases for many years. USA Swimming is addressing the dilemma of pool closures in the US by developing a series of Saving Pools Saves Lives Workshops. We do not have a magic wand, but the workshops are part of a comprehensive drowning prevention plan. It is obvious that when you cannot teach water safety skills and provide swimming lessons, drowning statistics go up, and children are affected more dramatically than anyone.

We would like for you to join USA Swimming in the effort to change the operational model for our pools and start the ripple effect. You will have that opportunity if you attend one of the following "Saving Pools Saves Lives Workshop".

September 9th, 2011 – San Diego, California
October 12th, 2011 – Seattle, Washington

November 4th, 2011 – St Louis, Missouri
November 30th, 2011 – Orlando, Florida

Check out the www.usaswimming.org/facilities to learn more and to register for the workshop. To speak to someone call 719-86-3594 Sue Nelson Aquatic Program Specialist.



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