

Swimming Ministry 2025

49
YEARS

Delivering the Joy
of Living Water

Water is vital for life. However in the United States alone, 12 people drown each day year around. The USA Swimming Foundation says, Drowning is the #1 cause of unintentional death for U.S. children ages 1-4; the #2 cause for children under 14. No child is ever water safe. 64% of African-American, 45% of Hispanic/Latino, 40% of Caucasian children have little or no swimming ability. The same is true for 79% of kids in households with lower than \$50,000 in income. Where the parents don't swim, kids have only a 19% chance of learning to swim. Statistics are similar for adults.

The World Health Organization reports, "Fear of death and water hold many people around the world in great bondage, but formal swimming lessons reduce childhood drownings by 88%." The goal of swim lessons is to make children and adults (especially those over 65) *safer* in, on, and around water.

The passion of the CHPC Swimming Ministry for 49 summers has been to equip students for what the American Red Cross describes as "survival swimming." An integral part of such survival is being relaxed and confident in the water so that swimming is fun. Our focus is not on speed or beautiful swimming. We prepare students for a lifetime relationship with water, including the Living Water, Jesus Christ. The rest will follow.

We are grateful to the staff, pools, and the scholarship donors that make our ministry possible: the USA Swimming Foundation and Step Into Swim grants, and individual donors. In 2026, we look forward to celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Swimming Ministry, Lord willing. Pray for loving, encouraging relationship among swimmers, staff and parents, and for good weather in which to learn easily.



We taught in two wonderful pools:

- North Hills Swim Club on Daly Rd is a large outdoor pool with a shallow children's pool, and a deep diving well that allows us to teach many American Red Cross Levels during daytime lessons.
- The Twin Towers Life-Enriching Community has a fully-accessible indoor heated pool (BELOW) and hot tub. We are most thankful for the use of these two pools for swim lessons and staff training. They make our vital life-saving lessons possible.



Classes begin with roll call, thanksgiving, and the “swimming verse,” Philippians 4:13.

The ministry’s Leadership Team matches students with staff members who are best suited to meet their individual needs, help them learn swimming skills and have fun as they do it. It’s a logistical challenge, but *trusting relationships* are vital to the learning process. They help to develop habits that enable both the students and teachers to succeed in swimming and in life.



The prework of matching swimmers & teachers pays off.

Each novice swimmer has “their own teacher.” This allows for personalized instruction within the American Red Cross standards. There are big group experiences (RIGHT), and small group ones (LEFT). The 5 yr-olds pictured learned pool safety by arranging pieces of a PlaySchool “Little People pool” —for example, “Why isn’t the diving board placed by the shallow water?”



We know that most students learn more easily from someone they know and can trust. Experienced supervisors lead small groups so teachers and students can get to know one another. Staff training in active listening comes alive when attempting to build a relationship with a young, non-verbal, or special-needs student.



Fearless, fun-loving swimmers need teachers who understand and enjoy them and match their energy levels, while a reluctant swimmer may need a more experienced teacher with a helper, plus an adult supervisor for oversight.



Teachers who have “challenging students” may experience dramatic growth in patience, perseverance, and prayer (plus a salary increase). Teachers come in all sizes and ages. We are committed to providing one that is just right for each swimmer.



This is very important. Hard work, laughter and lots of memories follow.



Listen & practice well!

Each teacher, swimmer, and family is unique. However, the ability to build warm, caring relationships — even with young, non-verbal, fearful children—can be learned.



Our annual June Staff Training focuses on relationship-building

tools and prayer. Supervisors expect and individually evaluate each staff person on how well they practice *active listening* and model being a professional teacher—with swimmers, parents and other staff. Personal evaluations affect each staff member’s paycheck.

Pictured (LEFT) is a teacher explaining homework to a parent. Homework demonstrations equip parents (even non-swimmers) to help students beyond class. Practice on simple things like humming, kicking, breathing, timing of strokes, etc. trains the swimmer’s mind...the body will follow. Building respectful relationships with “parent partners” can provide valuable clues about to how each child learns best.

Homework equips parents and

may encourage them to take adult lessons “to keep up with their kids” or to learn to be safe around water.

Pictured (BELOW) is a mother who asked to take lessons after seeing the effects on her children. On her left is another parent on staff, who



refined her own skills and joined our “MOM Team.” The ministry provided child care and lessons for her children, so she could focus on teaching. MOM are terrific.

Learning never stops...

To apply for Swim Ministry Staff, a person must be working at American Red Cross (ARC) skill Level 4 and be willing to lovingly interact with children, teens, and adults. Staff are paid to take lessons until they complete ARC Level 6. The ministry also pays for staff to take extra training in Adaptive Aquatics, or as a Life Guard, or a Water Safety Instructor. Experienced teachers learn to mentor, manage, train, and coach other staff. Serving swimmers’ needs stirs up everyone’s creative gifts. The daily staff meetings before and after lessons allow teachers to learn from each other by sharing teaching ideas, “secrets of success,” “problems I’m having,” and “a good surprise I had.” Then, we pray for various aspects of the lessons. The result is a healthy *interdependence* among the staff and an infectious spirit of fun.



(LEFT) AT UPPER SKILL LEVELS, TEACHERS EMPHASIZE “THE LITTLE THINGS THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE” LIKE HAND/ARM POSITIONS.



DEMO OF A SWIMMER PRACTICING SIDE BREATHING AND *HUMMING* IN A LARGE PASTA DISH FILLED WITH WATER. STUDENTS PRACTICE THIS FOR HOMEWORK.



SPECIAL TRAINING IN ADAPTIVE AQUATICS (ABOVE & RIGHT) ENABLES THE STAFF TO MEET SWIMMER NEEDS IN NEW WAYS TO BUILD TRUST AND SWIMMER CONFIDENCE.



(ABOVE) THE GREEN FROG FAMILY ON THE KICKBOARD REMINDS THE SWIMMER TO KEEP THE BOARD FLAT WHEN PRACTICING.



Fridays are awards days... times to celebrate.

Our Swim Ministry brochure promises: "We seek to catch students doing something right. We are committed to affirming the swimmers' uniqueness and abilities rather than motivating performances by techniques that tend to devalue them in their own eyes and in the eyes of others."

During the weekly awards ceremonies every swimmer receives a green "FROG CARD" (RIGHT)—a historical record of their skill level and their teacher's name. The staff lines up to present American Red Cross and special Swim Ministry awards and to recognize the swimmers and families for their hard work.

It's a privilege to love on swimmers

for a week (or more). The staff long remembers the patience, perseverance, and answers to prayer they experienced when working with a reluctant 10-year-old or an anxious 5-year-old. Some memories are hard to forget. Others make us smile all winter long and look forward to teaching next year...2026!



(RIGHT)
THE GRANDFATHER
TAUGHT IN 1984-
1997 AND THE MOM
(BURGANDY SHIRT)
IN THE EARLY 1990's.
THE REST HAVE BEEN
STUDENTS INCLUDING
THE 7-YEAR-OLD.
THEY HAVE QUITE
A COLLECTION OF
GREEN FROG CARDS.





**STAFF FOR DAY LESSONS
June 23-27, 2025.** Unlike some summers, this late June week was unusually sunny and hot. The swimmers, teachers and supervisors all wanted to stay in the water to cool off. The children's wading pool was a haven for parents and young "future swimmers." Katy Verhagen Wilson, Head of Staff, is under the pink arrow.

**STAFF FOR DAY LESSONS
July 14-18, 2025.** Since we teach "whatever the weather" we taught all week and only missed one hour of lessons. The staff was so enthusiastic and creative that they were able to teach during the few classes where there was "liquid sunshine" (rain) .



**STAFF FOR DAY LESSONS
July 28-Aug. 1, 2025.** We needed a wide-angle lense for this photo (we won't tell who's missing). Katy Verhagen-Wilson, the Head of Staff & Co-Administrator led the gifted staff for all weeks.



Photos of the staff and swimmers for the two "Evening Weeks" are on the next page.

PHOTOGRAPHERS FOR THE SCRAPBOOK: MARK EVANS, BARRY & SAM STARE, JERUSHA WICKERT AND LYNN ROSENBLUM



**EVENING LESSONS July 7-11
and July 21-25, 2025**

Evening lessons are designed for adults and youth who may not have daytime transportation. Many of the children and their parents are internationals. Some of the staff are at school or work during the day. Evening lessons allow them to teach and supervise.

Can you tell who the swimmers are and who the teachers are from looking at these photos? Hint: Some staff are in the water and others are along the top row of the photographs.



WHAT FUN TO SEE THE STUDENTS ACHIEVE AWARDS OVER SEVERAL YEARS OF LESSONS, AND HAVE OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS JOIN THE LESSONS. THE ADULT SWIMMERS ENCOURAGE THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND VICE VERSA!

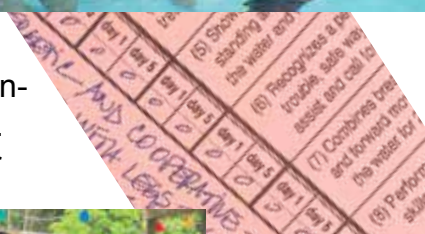


The Staff receives group training before each year's lessons and on-the-job training from supervisors and other staff throughout the summer. all staff keep records for the ministry, for grant outcome reports, and for the American Red Cross.



BE READY FOR STAFF MEETINGS. SIGN IN AND OUT ON THE TIME SHEET. REMEMBER "NO PAPERWORK, NO PAYCHECK" AND "SMILE A LOT!"

THANKS FROM A SWIMMER IS THE BEST "REWARD."



2025 Swim Ministry Action Photos

by Mark Evans



OUR "WELCOME TEAM" AND BUSINESS MANAGERS SERVE THE FAMILIES OF SWIMMERS AND THE STAFF. WE ARE SO THANKFUL FOR THEIR SERVICE.



ADULT LEADERS OF OUR CHILD-CARE TEAM MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR "MOMS" TO TEACH KNOWING THAT THEIR CHILDREN ARE SAFE AND LEARNING TO SWIM .



OUR GOD REIGNS...AND RAINS TOO.

Join us for Swimming Ministry 2026

50

YEARS

Delivering the Joy of Living Water

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2025 Statistics: The Summer Swimming Ministry of College Hill Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati OH, has completed its 49th season and is anticipating the 50th from June to August 2026. Join us!

- We offer *swimming lessons with an eternal difference*. We are an accredited American Red Cross Learn-To-Swim provider in the Greater Cincinnati area (OH, IN, KY). 2025 was the 2nd “transition year” in the ministry leadership succession plan. Katy Verhagen Wilson served as Head of Staff and Co-Administrator. The ministry founder Sharlyn Stare and logistics manager Barry Stare provided coaching and an “administrative shell.” In 2026, Katy and her support team will assume the bulk of the tasks. The Stares plan to continue as “playing coaches” and “ARC Water Safety Instructors” on staff.

- Staff training was June 12-14, 2025 at the church and Twin Towers. Daytime swim lessons were offered at North Hills Swim Club at 10 AM, 11AM and 12 PM the weeks of June 23-27, July 14-18, and July 8-Aug. 1. Evening lessons for adults and a limited number of youth were held at the pool at Twin Towers Life Enriching Community 6 PM-7:15 PM the weeks of July 7-11 and July 21-25. The demand for lessons was so great that we closed registrations on 6/11/25 due to pool and staffing limitations.

- Over the 5 weeks, 413 lessons were given, a 17% increase over 2024. The 69 paid staff ranged in age from a 10-year-old “helper” to an 82-year-old teacher/supervisor—*every age equipped and equipping for ministry*. Why do we pay staff? Because our teaching, record-keeping and creativity expectations are high and warrant staff being treated as professionals, even if the pay is nominal for their service.

- The ministry budget was fully funded from fees, individual scholarship donations, and two major grants (USA Swimming Foundation, and the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance’s “Step Into Swim”) and Twin Towers Life Enriching Community support. This past summer, partial or full swim scholarships worth nearly \$7680 were provided to children, teens and multiple-child families. Many have little or no access to swim lessons such as CHPC’s Whiz Kids and Jesus University dancers. It is a joy to serve God and Greater Cincinnati in this vital ministry!

KATY VERHAGEN WILSON & SHARLYN STARE



PHILIPPIANS 4:13 — “I CAN DO ANYTHING GOD WANTS ME TO DO BY THE POWER HE GIVES ME TO DO IT!”