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YMCA Launches Regional Swim Safety Initiative

Bringing critical swim skills and drowning prevention resources to children who need them most.

[Baton Rouge, LA, April 27, 2026] – The YMCA of the Capital Area is proud to launch a life-saving swim safety initiative, made possible through support from the CDC Foundation, Lane Regional Medical Center, The City of Zachary, Georgia Pacific and the Winifred and Kevin P. Reilly Jr. Fund. This work is made possible not only through generous community support, but also through strong partnerships with local school districts, whose collaboration helps connect students to these life-saving opportunities. The program begins this week with second-grade students from Baton Rouge and surrounding communities, expanding critical water safety access in communities where opportunities for formal swim instruction are often limited.

This initiative is part of the YMCA’s broader commitment to ensuring that every child, regardless of zip code or income, has access to essential water safety skills. Through structured, instructor-led lessons, students will learn how to be safe in and around water while building confidence and lifelong skills.

In 2025, the YMCA of the Capital Area delivered more than 3,000 free swim lessons, with more than 80% of participants achieving critical water safety benchmarks, including floating, treading water, and safe entry and exit techniques. These outcomes reflect measurable progress in reducing drowning risk and equipping children with the skills they need to stay safe.

“Drowning is preventable, and programs like this are changing the trajectory for children and families across our region,” said Sean Elliott, President & CEO, YMCA of the Capital Area. “We’re especially proud to expand into rural parishes, where access to swim instruction can be limited but the need is just as urgent.”

By bringing this program to the Capital Area, the YMCA and our coalition of partners and funders are working together to close gaps in access, reduce risk, and ensure more children can safely enjoy the water.

For more information about YMCA aquatics programs or to support this initiative, please visit <https://www.ymcabr.org/aquatics>.

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About the Y

Since 1917, the YMCA of the Capital Area has been serving the community with programs and services that meet the needs of the people through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Throughout our parish the Y engages thousands of individuals annually – regardless of income or background- in hopes to nurture the potential of children, improve the nation’s health and well-being, and provide opportunities to give back and support our neighbors. The YMCA of the Capital Area is a 501(c)(3) organization with the long-standing relationship and physical presence not just to promise, but deliver, lasting personal and social change. Find out more by visiting www.ymcabr.org.