



BROWARD COUNTY COMMISSION
NEWS-RELEASE
Parks and Recreation Division • 950 N.W. 38th St. • Oakland Park, FL 33309
Phone: 954-357-8100 • Fax: 954-561-5359 • www.broward.org/parks

DRAFT FOR APPROVAL

DATE: October 5, 2006

CONTACT: Arlene Hauben

PHONE: 954-357-8115 E-MAIL: ahauben@broward.org

SWIM CENTRAL TEACHES ONE MILLION WATER SAFETY LESSONS
- Drowning prevention a high priority in Broward County -

SWIM Central has passed the one million mark in lessons taught. Since the inception of SWIM Central in 1999, 116,000 children have participated in this nationally recognized water safety program.

From the beginning, the goal of SWIM Central has been to reduce the number of drowning accidents in Broward County. The solution was to provide a minimum of eight water safety education lessons to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten children in the Broward County Schools system. Funding is provided by the Children's Services Council in the amount of \$400,000, with a cash match of \$400,000 from the Broward County Commission. The third partner is the School Board of Broward County, which contributes \$200,000 to the program.

Commissioner Sue Gunzburger, a board member on the Children's Service Council (CSC), said, "The collaboration between CSC, the School Board, and the Broward County Commission effectively provides Swim Safety Education lessons to thousands of children. As a result, the number of children drowning in Broward County, with the exception of 2003, has gone down every year since 1999."

Early efforts to form SWIM Central involved Commissioner Diana Wasserman-Rubin, at the time a school board member, who had been instrumental in bringing the American Red Cross Whale Tales program to the County schools. As early as 1997, Broward County Commissioner Ilene Lieberman assumed leadership of an ad hoc committee that met every month for a year to formulate a plan for a water safety program.

Today, the scope of SWIM Central has been expanded to reach out to children from ages six months to 14 years old. The goal on a yearly basis is to educate 24,000 children about water safety. Currently, 100 schools participate, representing 23,000 children. Lessons are provided at 45 swimming pools throughout the County.

"The success of Swim Central, housed at Broward County Parks and Recreation, has meant heightened parent and community awareness regarding the importance of water safety," commented Matt Berman, director of SWIM Central. "Today, we are very pleased to report that more than one million lessons have benefited many thousands of children."