

Safety Tip of the Month – July 2006
VSI Safety Committee

“USA Swimming Water Safety Promotion”

Prince William Swim Club's (PWSC) Coach, Jamie Gaskill, obtained the USA Swimming Water Safety Promotional materials from their web site. She decided to host the water safety even in May, with three goals in mind:

1. Teach water safety elements to children currently swimming in a USA Swimming program and to children who are not currently in a swimming program.
2. Provide an increased community awareness of water safety.
3. Create a “Fun Day” for both USA Swimming swimmers and those children not in a swimming program.

The PWSC swimmers each obtained pledges from their peers regarding the “promise to adhere to water safety guidelines at all times.” The PWSC swimmer with the most signed pledges received a prize. The PWSC swimmers each worked on a poster, which needed to incorporate the following water safety rules:

- Learn to swim!
- Swim with a buddy at all times!
- Swim in a supervised area of water!
- Always read and obey water rules!
- Use swimming flotation devices when in the water for a long period or when in a boat!
- Do not swim if you are TOO tired, TOO cold, or have had TOO much sun!
- Plan your aquatic recreation, based on the whole family's swimming ability.
- Always enter the water feet first!
- Be aware of weather changes and clear the water immediately if a storm is approaching!
- If a friend is having trouble staying above the water, throw a flotation device to her / him, call for help, but do not attempt to go after the swimmer yourself, unless you have extensive lifeguard training!

The PWSC class involved more than 30 USA Swimming registered swimmers and 15 children who were not in a swimming program, with 3 of these children unable to swim. This PWSC Safety Event motivated at least one of these three individuals to enroll in swim lessons this summer. The PWSC safety program included 3 coaches, each covering approximately 15 children. Three life guards also covered the pool during this event. The instructors taught the children how to perform the “survival float” and how to stay warm. They discussed water safety in a pool and in a lake. At the end of the event, they had relays. Parents volunteered to judge the relays.

This excellent Safety Event, held at the *Dale City Recreation Center*, proved to increase the awareness of each swimmer and those adult spectators about Water Safety. The PWSC swimmers shared their knowledge with children in the community who had little or no aquatic experience. Coach Gaskill would like to repeat this event next year, with perhaps some newspaper advertising, a specification of minimum age for the event, and a bit more time to be allotted to the safety teaching itself.