



Making a Splash in Our Community

Celebrating the YMCA's Profound Impact on the Aquatic Community in the Chippewa Valley

The YMCA of the Chippewa Valley has been committed to developing strong swimmers in the Chippewa Valley for over a century through its comprehensive aquatic programs. From teaching fundamental swimming skills to hosting daily water aerobic classes, the YMCA has made a splash in the lives of tens of thousands, fostering a love for water and a dedication to safety.

According to the Center of Disease Control and Prevention, drowning is the leading cause of death in children. In the United States, more children ages 1 to 4 die from drowning than any other cause of death. For children ages 5 to 14, drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death. It is estimated there are 4,000 fatal accidental drownings every year, averaging 11 drowning deaths per day and 8,000 non-fatal drownings, averaging 22 per day.

More than 100 years ago, the YMCA created the concept of group swim lessons and to this day, YMCAs across the country teach more than 1 million children invaluable water safety and swimming skills every year. The Y's size and reach as a vital community asset uniquely positions it to deliver swim lessons and water safety education to many communities, including the Chippewa Valley. In 2023, the YMCA of the Chippewa Valley taught 1,678 children to swim. In 2024, that number is on the rise and the number of adults learning to swim is increasing, too.

The Chippewa Valley is surrounded by a number of beautiful waterways. Year-round we find our community partaking in numerous water or ice activities such as kayaking, tubing, boating, swimming, ice fishing, and skating. With easy access to water, children and adults can quickly find themselves in a situation for which they are not prepared. Because of that, 90% of parents see swimming as a key life skill for children, but 24% of parents have low confidence in their children's skills in and around the water. Knowledge is power, especially when it comes to water safety.

"Water is a powerful element – it has the capacity to both challenge and heal. Our aquatic programs are designed to empower individuals with the skills and confidence they need to safely enjoy and respect the water. We have seen countless success stories, from toddlers taking their first splash to seniors finding new strength through water aerobics," said Lori Kleist, Regional Executive Director of Aquatics.

YMCA swim lessons cater to all ages and skill levels, emphasizing safety, stroke development, and endurance. Both children and adult participants receive the instruction necessary to become competent and confident swimmers. Beyond lessons, the Y's aquatics programs include competitive swim teams, family swim sessions, and therapeutic water activities.

Through the Y's outreach, the impact on the community has been profound. Families trust the YMCA's certified instructors to provide a nurturing environment where children can learn essential life-saving skills. Adults find camaraderie and physical benefits in water aerobics classes designed to enhance cardiovascular health and muscular strength with minimal joint impact.

"The YMCA of the Chippewa Valley is more than just a place to swim – it's a community where each splash represents growth, strength, and joy. We take pride in knowing that our aquatic programs contribute to the overall health and vitality of the Chippewa Valley," added Kleist.

The YMCA is a cornerstone in the Chippewa Valley, nurturing the potential of kids, promoting healthy living, and fostering a sense of social responsibility. The aquatics programs play a critical role in this mission, ensuring that both youth and adults have access to high-quality swim instruction and aquatic fitness opportunities. The YMCA of the Chippewa Valley is committed to continuing to make waves and enrich lives – one swimmer at a time.

YMCA OF THE CHIPPEWA VALLEY