

# THE BIG PROBLEM

It is important for all kids to learn how to swim and be safe around water, but this is not always the reality. Minority children are not learning to swim at an early age and are drowning at three times the rate of white children.

Research finds that a leading cause of this problem is the parent's ability and attitude toward swimming. If parents are not comfortable with water themselves, it is unlikely that they will encourage their children to swim.

Another factor is the socio-economic conditions within minority communities. According to *Beyond ABCs – Growing up in Dallas County*, published by Children's Medical Center, 25% of children residing in Dallas County are living at or below the poverty level.

## The YMCA's Urban Swim Initiative addresses this problem by:

- Teaching elementary, middle and high school youth to swim.
- Developing and encouraging minorities to compete on swim teams.
- Educating and training minority youth to become certified lifeguards and positive role models in their community.

**In Texas, an average of 70 children drown each year; and for every child who drowns, an estimated four additional hospitalizations and 14 emergency department visits are due to submersion injuries.**

(DFPS and Dallas Morning News, respectively.)

**The mission of the YMCA is to put Christian values into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.**

# YMCA's GRAND SOLUTION

Because we care about children's safety and because we have over 100 years of experience teaching people how to swim, the YMCA developed a process to teach minority children some basic water safety skills and help them have fun around water at the same time.

Our pre and post-test results compel us to try to grow this initiative and reach even more children and families. Only if we're successful in helping parents understand how critical these skills are to the safety and well-being of their children will we be satisfied that we are making progress.

Ten skills were tested on the first and last day of the lessons in the 2008-2009 school year. Ten points were awarded for each skill completed. Results were measured by how many more points were received on the post-test compared to the pre-test results.

## SKILLS EVALUATED

1. Select and fasten a Personal Floatation Device
2. Bob and hold breath for three seconds
3. Steamline kick on stomach for five feet
4. Crawl stroke 20 yards with rhythmic breathing
5. Back float 10 seconds
6. Backstroke 20 yards
7. Jump in deep water and return to the wall
8. Tread water for two minutes
9. Standing dive
10. Surface dive in five feet water



## TEST RESULTS

### Pre-test

92% of students reported they swam often in the summer

5% could swim 20 yards - a measure for kids swimming without a parent

0% of students could perform all ten skills that were tested

### Post-test

77% could swim 20 yards

90% improved by 30 points or more

76% of the kids improved by 50 points or more

