

SUMMARY:

One with the Water is a nonprofit swim school committed to providing greater access to the lifesaving skill of swimming, especially children and adults with high risk, high need, and limited resources. For six years now, One with the Water has been offering need-based scholarships for premium swimming lessons to children with special needs, service disabled veterans, and low income families in Los Angeles county. Staffed by expert competitive swimmers and former Olympians, One with the Water is currently the only Level 3 Disability certified swim school in Southern California.

One in every five drowning deaths occur in children under the age of fourteen, and accidental drowning is the leading cause of death in California between the ages of 1 and 4. Children with special needs have increased drowning risk factors and are statistically more likely to present in low income families, creating a potentially fatal combination of high risk and little to no resources to address the dangers. One with the Water is seeking \$5,000 amount of dollars to increase our scholarship students from 80 to 90 over the funding period of one year. We are building on our existing model of high quality swim training provided by expert coaches in a flexible, low overhead environment. New coaches and pool time/space will be added to the current schedule in order to expand the student roster.

Within the current budget, 2.5 hours of pool time (the approximate amount of training time in one month) costs One with the Water between \$212 and \$230 depending on location. All grant monies go directly to the hourly cost of providing lessons, which include insurance, liabilities, pool rental, and instructor fees. All other costs to the program will continue to be covered by our existing fundraising method, offering premium swim lessons to the greater Los Angeles area at competitive rates.

INTRODUCTION:

Mission: In 2011, Coach Kenneth Rippetoe started One with the Water®, a 501(c)3 nonprofit swim school, with the mission of providing greater access to the lifesaving skill of swimming, especially children and adults with high risk, high needs, and limited resources. Many children most at risk of accidental drowning are often the same children who don't have the resources needed to be safe and successful in the water. *Everyone* should be able to learn the life-saving skill of swimming, particularly the most vulnerable members of our community.

Now, One with the Water provides need-based scholarships for premium swimming lessons to children with special needs, service-disabled Veterans, and low income families in the greater Los Angeles County area, including locations in Culver City, Santa Monica, and Burbank, plus two satellite locations in Ohio and Wisconsin.

Programs and services:

- *Individual swimming lessons for children and adults:* One with the Water expert coaches assess individual swimmer needs and design a custom training plan to build awareness and confidence in the water. Our gentle methods empower all students to be safe and comfortable in the water, and ultimately to learn what success looks like, both in and out of the water.
- *Adaptive Athletes Swim Team:* Our swim team (The Dolphins) provides an opportunity for adaptive athletes to practice under expert coaches from a young age, through high school and beyond, combining all the health benefits of swimming with the positive mental and social outcomes of team dynamics.

“Nicole was born healthy. For seven years, she was a normal, happy vivacious girl – until the seizures started. At age seven, she was diagnosed with epilepsy, which spiraled rapidly out of control. Therapy, medication, nothing worked to slow her seizures, which culminated in a seizure that left her with permanent damage on her right side.

When Nicole started swimming lessons with One with the Water, she rolled onto the pool deck in a wheelchair. Now, she walks onto the pool deck with her mother and brother each day, a huge grin on her face. The benefits of swimming are evident in all her therapies, increasing her strength and mobility at a rapid rate. She loves the water most though, and for those 30

minutes each time, she works hard, stretching her arms across the lane, stitching uncooperative muscle fiber and wayward neurons back together. For Nicole, swimming has restored her in more ways than one.”

Organization: One with the Water employs 8 coaches, and 2 administrative staff to provide the services needed. The coaching staff is comprised of highly skilled, professional swimmers, former Olympians, and ongoing competitors. Additionally, founder Coach Kenneth Rippetoe has a Level 3 Disability Certification with the American Swimming Coaches Association, and trained with Kahlon Family Services and Inizio Interventions to help children with Autism Spectrum disorders and other special needs. Currently, One with the Water is the *only* Level 3 Disability certified swim school in Southern California.

Funding and Partners: One with the Water has a platinum Guidestar Rating for financial accountability and transparency. Our advisory board is made up of a mix of respected local professionals and champion swimmers and athletes. (See attached list.) All members provide in-kind donations of time and professional expertise, but due to our unique funding sources, are not required to provide a financial contribution at this time. The primary source of fundraising for One with the Water’s scholarship program is the swim lessons offered to the at-large Los Angeles community at competitive rates.

Our approach to swimming lessons goes beyond individual skill building to include investments in local and national partnerships. By working closely with dedicated community members, such as early childhood educators, teachers, and staff from other local therapy organizations, we continue to build strong and lasting relationships within the local communities to ensure the long-term sustainability of our work. Past and current sponsors include Disney, DirecTV, Speedo, Loaded Boards, Champion System, LA Tri Club, Sports Insurance Solutions, Arvix, Finis, BY Studio, Kiewit Construction and US Masters Swimming

Since 2011, One with the Water has taught the life-saving skill of swimming to over 1,000 students through our scholarship program, including the current roster of athletes, numbering 80.

“I am so thankful I found One with the Water! I have two boys, 6 and 8. One of them has been diagnosed with autism and the other one was so scared he wouldn’t even put his toes in the water at his first lesson. Silke was so patient and gracious with both boys. Today was their 4th swimming lesson and BOTH of them were floating on their backs by themselves, going under the water, and my son with the autism diagnosis was swimming on his own!”

Unfortunately, as long as there are children of all ability levels with potential unrestricted access to bodies of water, the need will remain for life-saving swimming lessons. To that end, our continuing efforts are focused on increasing the number of scholarships available to our low-income families and adaptive athletes.

PROBLEM:

Situation: According to the CDC, approximately one in five people who die from drowning are children 14 and younger. For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency department care for nonfatal submersion injuries.¹ The rate of near drowning is much higher, as not all near drownings are reported. With its miles of coastlines, multitude of natural freshwater bodies, and an abundance of swimming pools, Californians are at increased risk for drowning and near drowning incidents, with drowning being the leading cause of accidental death for children between the ages of 1 and 4.

Statistics for Los Angeles County: (Available through 2013).

Death
Year: 2003 to 2013
Residents of Los Angeles
Race/Ethnicity: All Race/Ethnicity
Age: 0 through 19
Cause Group: Unintentional - Drowning/Submersion

Race/Ethnicity	N
White	58
Black	27
Hispanic	54
Asian/Pi	22
Total	182
Unlisted rows have zero cases	

Source: CDPH Vital Statistics Death Statistical Master Files
Prepared by: California Department of Public Health, Safe and Active Communities Branch
Report generated from <http://epi.center.cdph.ca.gov> on: August 07, 2017

For the years 2014-2015, an additional 27 children between the ages of 0-17 died as a result of accidental drowning.²

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/water-safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html>

² <http://www.ican4kids.org/Reports/Child%20Death%20Review.pdf>

Finally, children with special needs face higher risk of drowning, as well as other barriers to a healthy, fulfilling, more active life.

- Among children with autism, the risk of drowning increases exponentially. *“Our analysis reveals that **children with autism are 160 times as likely to die from drowning as the general pediatric population.** Wandering commonly occurs with autistic children, and because children with autism often have limited social and communication skills, they may seek out bodies of water as a serene place to calm themselves and relieve anxiety. Often with tragic outcomes. **Given the exceptionally heightened risk of drowning for children with autism, swimming classes should be the intervention of top priority.**” – Dr. Li³*
- Children with certain developmental disorders have a higher prevalence of being overweight and with the lack in participation in physical activities due to fear of failure or injury, places these children as higher risk of obesity and other associated health conditions.
- Children and youth with disabilities are at higher risk for experiencing lower levels of social-emotional well-being than their peers without disabilities. They are more likely to be bullied and harassed, have a limited number of friends, and engage in fewer extracurricular activities than their peers.⁴

Significance: Drowning prevention for members of our most vulnerable populations is literally a matter of life and death. And, aside from an increased risk of drowning, children with permanent disabilities who lack consistent therapeutic interventions face increased isolation, increased care requirements, decreased mental health, increased fear and anxiety, and shortened life expectancy.

Causes:

Drowning is preventable but most high risk potential victims meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Proximity to water sources. Los Angeles county alone has over 43,000 private pools plus their natural water sources include 75 miles of coastline, 4 major rivers, and 74 lakes/reservoirs.⁵
- Lack of access to swimming lessons with qualified coaches. For example, the low income neighborhoods of Watts and Florence had

³ https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2017-03/cums-iwa031617.php

⁴ http://digitalcommons.csumb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1028&context=caps_thes_all

⁵ <http://www.laalmanac.com/geography/ge02.php>

zero private pools, and only four public pools, one of which just reopened in 2016 after being closed for a decade.⁶

- Lack of financial resources. According to decades of research, children with disabilities are statistically more likely to present in a low-income environment.⁷ (The average cost of private swim lessons in Los Angeles is over \$200/month).
- Finally, as mentioned above, autistic children in particular have an increased affinity for water, increasing their risk of drowning by up to 160% when compared with the general pediatric population.

⁶ <http://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-cl-swimming-pools-20131202-dto-htmlstory.html#axzz2mL2DPRae>,

⁷ <http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/data/children-disabilities-special-needs-opportunities-participate-quality-programs-expanded.pdf>