

AQUATICS CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE



“There is a direct link between racial justice and water safety because often times, it’s communities of color that don’t have access to public pools and pools in general, and many New York City children of color don’t know how to swim as a result.”

- Council Member Shekar Krishnan, Council District 25 (Jackson Heights, Elmhurst & Woodside, Queens)

THE CHALLENGE

Drowning is one of the most urgent and preventable public health issues of our time. The crisis is exacerbated in communities of color due to a lack of access to swim instruction and a shortage of trained lifeguards.

THE Y’S SOLUTION

The Y established the Aquatics Center of Excellence (ACE) in 2021 to provide a comprehensive approach to scaling swim safety efforts throughout the five boroughs through three primary objectives:

1. Provide greater access to swim safety instruction, particularly in lower-income communities of color.
2. Build the lifeguard and swim instructor pipeline through free Lifeguard Training & Certification (LTC) courses.
3. Establish citywide aquatics advocacy.

THE URGENT NEED

In summer 2024, seven people drowned in NYC public waters, the majority of whom were people of color. As we look towards next summer, timing is critical to offer more life-saving swim instruction to youth, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

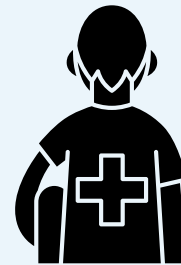
THE Y’S IMPACT IN 2025



31,570
Swim Lessons for Youth



5,289
Swim Lessons for Adults



374
LTC Participants



264
Lifeguards Certified

TRANSFORMING LIVES TOGETHER

- \$10,000: Sponsors 2 classes of students for school-based swim lessons
- \$5,000: Sponsors 1 class of students for school-based swim lessons
- \$1,500: Sponsors 10 students to participate in a swim class
- \$500: Sponsors training for an aspiring lifeguard



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AQUATICS CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE PROGRAMMING



SWIM SAFETY: Studies show that one in four NYC high school students cannot swim; outcomes are more dire for children in communities of color. Through ACE, the Y is expanding aquatics programming to increase access to swim safety skills in high-need communities, predominantly in low-income communities of color. School-based swim programs pair DOE Schools with Y branches to provide swim lessons for young people during their physical education period.



LIFEGUARD TRAINING & CERTIFICATION PROGRAM: Nationwide, there were approximately 31,000 fewer lifeguards, and other recreational protective service workers in 2020 than in 2018. The Lifeguard Training & Certification program seeks to reverse this trend on a local scale by recruiting, training, and certifying NYC lifeguards and swim instructors.



NYC LIFEGUARD & AQUATICS TASKFORCE: Initiated and co-chaired by the Y, the task force convenes key stakeholders from across New York City to develop short- and long-term solutions to achieve greater alignment in citywide aquatics policies and to collectively advocate for increased government support to improve the aquatics ecosystem.

YMCA OF GREATER NEW YORK

We're here for all New Yorkers – to empower youth, improve health, and strengthen community.

For nearly 175 years, the YMCA of Greater New York has been helping all New Yorkers reach their full potential. As New York City's leading nonprofit community service and well-being organization, the Y empowers everyone, no matter who they are or where they're from, by providing access and opportunities for all to learn, grow, and thrive.

We provide a place to play, to be healthy, and to give back. We give parents childcare, young adults job training, seniors a way to connect, and children a safe place to go. By bringing people together from different backgrounds, perspectives, and generations, the Y improves overall health and well-being, ignites youth empowerment, and connects and supports diverse communities across New York City.



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