



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Swimming skills can save lives: YMCA

Water safety in spotlight at the Y for National Drowning Prevention Week

CALGARY, ALTA.—Most drowning victims never intended to go in the water.

After years of missed swimming lessons due to the pandemic and more newcomers arriving in the city, [YMCA Calgary](#) is diving into National Drowning Prevention Week to help people stay safe in, on and around the water.

Steve Elliot, general manager of aquatics at YMCA Calgary, knows first-hand the importance of getting kids back into swimming programs.

“Lessons were impacted for two or three years, and we’re seeing older kids entering programs typically aimed at younger children,” says Elliot. “This year has been a crash course for kids across the city who are discovering how to be in group settings independent from their parents or guardians and also learning or re-learning how to be safe around the water.”

And, Elliot says, it’s a skill that can save lives.

More than 400 Canadians drown every year, often despite being close to safety, according to the [Lifesaving Society](#). The high and preventable number makes drowning the third leading cause of unintentional death in Canadians younger than 60. Weak and non-swimmers account for 29 per cent of those fatalities.

“YMCA Calgary plays a key role in building safe and healthy communities,” says Shannon Doram, president and CEO, YMCA Calgary. As we acknowledge Drowning Prevention Week, I am grateful for our teams who work to ensure our pools are a safe place to play, be challenged, build resilience and grow.”

Aimed at teaching the necessary skills to survive an unexpected fall into deep water, YMCA Calgary’s [Swim to Survive](#) program is the perfect starting point for weak swimmers and newcomers who, according to the Society, are four times more likely to be unable to swim than people born in Canada.

“Before opening the Saddletowne YMCA, a lot of people I spoke with expressed their excitement for the facility and shared stories about how, before coming to Canada, the only way they could access a similar facility would be at a hotel,” says Elliot. “When we opened the

facility, we realized how much we take for granted when it comes to not only swimming for recreation but also water safety.”

Throughout National Drowning Prevention Week, YMCA branches across Calgary are open for people to drop in and learn more about good water safety habits. Following themes developed by the Lifesaving Society, staff will spend the week talking with pool guests about everything from boating safety to drowning prevention techniques.

After a week of swim safety conversations from now until Saturday, the YMCA Calgary team will hand out guest passes to people showing good water safety practices on Tuesday, July 25 for World Drowning Prevention Day.

“We want to celebrate water-safe behaviours that we see all the time and take a moment to stop and thank people who are participating. The best thing everyone can do is just come to the YMCA, swim and start your water safety journey,” says Elliot.

Young or old, returning to swimming lessons or joining group or private lessons for the first time, it’s never too late to learn lifesaving water skills.

“As a parent, knowing that my kids have now had another year in YMCA swimming lessons is such a relief,” says Elliot. “I trust that, if they ever find themselves in a body of water, they will know what to do to be safe.”

Every week is drowning prevention week at the YMCA. To learn more about YMCA Calgary aquatic programs, visit the Y online at ymcocalgary.org.

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ABOUT YMCA CALGARY

Since 1902, YMCA Calgary has been committed to serving our community. From building social connections, increasing physical activity, and improving health outcomes, we have been an organization Calgarians can count on. As a longstanding partner of the City of Calgary, YMCA Calgary operates six city-owned health and wellness facilities, six licensed child development centres, two outdoor camp sites and dozens of community program sites across the city. Our breadth of programs play an important role within the fabric of our city, leading to a healthier, more vibrant community.

For more information and to arrange an interview, media can contact:

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Please note: Steve Elliot will be available for in-person and on-camera interviews at [Melcor YMCA at Crowfoot](#) on Monday, July 17. Please contact Samantha to arrange an interview.