Adaptive swim classes build confidence and safety for autistic children

Instructors build physical, social and behavioral skills through occupational therapy techniques

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center

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NEWS PACKAGE		
SUGGESTED TEASE	FOR MOST, SUMMER HEAT MEANS IT'S TIME TO GET BACK INTO THE POOL. BUT FOR THOSE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM AND THEIR FAMILIES, WATER CAN BE A SCARY CHALLENGE. COMING UP, HOW A NEW PROGRAM LED BY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS IS TEACHING THESE YOUNG SWIMMERS THE SKILLS TO HAVE A FUN, SAFE TIME IN THE WATER.	
ANCHOR LEAD	AS SWIMMING POOLS OPEN ACROSS THE COUNTRY, A NEW CHALLENGE EMERGES FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM. FOR THESE FAMILIES, THE POOL CAN BE FRIGHTENING PLACE, AND MANY CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM MAY NOT RESPOND WELL TO THE SAME SWIMMING CLASSES TAUGHT TO OTHER CHILDREN. BARB CONSIGLIO HAS THE DETAILS ON HOW A NEW SPECIALIZED PROGRAM IS BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND SAFETY IN THE WATER FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN.	
(PACKAGE START)		
CG: Courtesy: The Ohio State	(Nats - Sound) :02	
University Wexner Medical Center Shots of Cooper and Sarah around pool	SINCE COOPER SOTELLO WAS JUST A BABY, HIS MOM HAS BEEN HOPEFUL THAT HE WOULD JOIN IN ON FAMILY SWIM TIME. :05	
CG: Sarah Cline Cooper's mom	"Cooper's been around water most of his life. My parents have a swimming pool. So we've tried to get him interested in swimming and comfortable with swimming since he was probably about a year old." :13	
Shots of Cooper outside the pool	BUT FOR YEARS, IT'S BEEN A STRUGGLE TO MAKE SWIMMING SAFE AND FUN FOR COOPER, WHO WAS DIAGNOSED WITH AUTISM AT EIGHTEEN MONTHS OLD.	
Shots of adaptive swim class	FOR THOSE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM,	

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SWIMMING CAN BE SCARY. IN FACT, DROWNING IS THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF ACCIDENTAL DEATH¹ AMONG THOSE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM. :15 "They wander, they get away, they're drawn towards a pond or something in their neighborhood, or they're out on vacation and they are drawn towards the beach or the CG: Erika Kemp **Ohio State Wexner Medical Center** pool. So that is where we see the highest incidents of drowning in individuals with autism.":13 THAT'S WHY RESEARCHERS AT THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER DEVELOPED AN ADAPTIVE SWIM PROGRAM TO Shots of instructors teaching TEACH THE BASICS OF SWIMMING - AND EVEN A swim class LOVE OF THE WATER - TO YOUNG SWIMMERS LIKE COOPER.:10 "We started the program at OSU and it's helped him a lot with his comfort in and around the water. And he's Sarah Cline (CG'd earlier) actually started enjoying it.":10 ERIKA KEMP, A PEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL Shots of Kemp working on THERAPIST AT OHIO STATE. LAUNCHED A NEW computer PILOT STUDY OFFERING PERSONALIZED AQUATIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN. Shot of swim student jumping off INITIAL RESULTS SHOW THAT THE CLASSES NOT diving board and getting out of ONLY IMPROVE SWIM SKILLS AND SAFETY, THEY the pool safely. BUILD COMPETENCY THAT GOES BEYOND THE WATER.:17 "So many times, families just want to go to the pool in the summer with all of their children. And so what I want to Erika Kemp (CG'd earlier) do is enable those families to feel like they can do that." :10 AND AFTER SPENDING TIME IN THE POOL WITH Shots of Cooper in the pool KEMP AND HER TEAM. COOPER IS SHOWING MAJOR. SIGNS OF PROGRESS.:05 "He's excited to go every week. And he's excited to get Sarah Cline (CG'd earlier) in. He smiles and laughs and splashes.":07 "Every kid that we've put through the program has Erika Kemp (CG'd earlier) made gains.":03 FOR COOPER AND HIS FAMILY, THAT MEANS LESS Shots of Cooper in the pool WORRYING AND MORE SUMMER FUN. :04 "It just makes me really happy and proud. It's amazing Sarah Cline (CG'd earlier) seeing him succeed and be happy. :06 AT THE OHIO STATE WEXNER MEDICAL CENTER. Shots of swimming class THIS IS BARB CONSIGLIO REPORTING.:02

(PACKAGE END) -----ANCHOR TAG

WITH THE SUCCESS OF THE PILOT PROGRAM, OHIO STATE IS EXPANDING THEIR RESEARCH AND THE ADAPTIVE SWIM CLASSES, WITH THE GOAL OF IMPLEMENTING SIMILAR PROGRAMS TO HELP THE MILLIONS OF AUTISTIC CHILDREN SAFELY EXPERIENCE THE JOY OF SWIMMING.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Share it! Suggested tweet:

Did you know that drowning is the number one accidental cause of death for children on the autism spectrum? Occupational therapy experts at the <a href="Months of Boundary Common Support of Common Supp

Suggested post:

Drowning is the number one accidental cause of death for children on the autism spectrum. Occupational therapists at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center have created a special program that teaches children on the autism spectrum to be safe and have fun in the pool. https://bit.ly/3Mz63ri.

EXTRA BITES

Kemp talks about teaching children with autism: "Every kid is a little bit different, and a lot of the big challenges have to do with being able to learn in the same way that their peers learn."

CG: Erika Kemp Ohio State Wexner Medical Center Kemp explains why safety is so important for kids with autism: "The big focus is safety swim skills, that if they were to be out of view of a parent or on a vacation or wander away and find themselves near a pond. A lot of kids with autism love water. They love the feel of the water on their body. They love to splash. They love to be in that world."

Kemp says the program is personalized for each child: "What's their best mode of learning? What type of person should they be paired with? Do they need visuals? Do they need reinforcers? All of those kinds of things can also be embedded, which is I think what makes this unique and that it's not just focused on swim skills. But also we're supporting the instructional needs and the interventional needs of each child." :21

CG: Sarah Cline Cooper's mom Sarah says Cooper has made a lot of progress: "Now he'll actually hop by himself in the shallow end of the pool. He can pull himself in and out of the water. He can put on flippers and kick his legs and move his arms. He's been willing to jump off the edge if someone catches him.":17

CG: Sarah Cline Cooper's mom

Sarah says the program gave her a newfound peace of mind: "As a mom, it makes me feel a lot more comfortable taking him around water, just because I feel like he is a little safer and he is definitely happier, which makes me happy."

Sarah says every kid should have the chance to succeed: "I think it's beautiful that programs like this exist because all children, no matter their neurology, deserve to take part in activities and get help that they need and the support that they need to succeed."

References

¹Autism & Safety Facts, **National Autism Association.** Online: https://nationalautismassociation.org/resources/autism-safety-facts/

For viewer information on this story contact:

The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center: 1-800-293-5123 Log onto http://wexnermedical.osu.edu - click on "Media Room"

Produced by:



1800 West 5th Ave. Columbus, Ohio 43212 Phone: (614) 932-9950 Fax: (614) 932-9920 www.mediasourcety.com

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