



COMMUNITY-ENGAGED LEARNING

ADAPTIVE SWIM

PATHWAY: NUTRITION AND EXERCISE

Initiative Description

Adaptive Swim is an outreach program that will provide basic water safety and swimming skills to children with various physical, developmental, and neurological disabilities throughout the community. Run by medical students and ODU student volunteers, this program will provide adaptive swim classes that promote physical health, emotional development, and inclusive participation in aquatic activities.

The Need

- Drowning is the leading cause of death in children ages 1-4, and the second leading cause of death in children 5-14. Children with disabilities are at an even higher risk of drowning fatalities, so access to basic water safety and swimming skills can save lives.
- The cost of swimming lessons and the limited availability of adaptive programs create significant access barriers for families. This program will provide life-saving water safety and basic swimming skills at no cost, eliminating the financial burden of specialized instruction.
- Structured adaptive water activities can improve strength, coordination, motor skills and confidence, fostering growth across developmental domains. This program will also provide a safe space for participants to learn and interact with peers while engaging in enjoyable water activities.

Community Outcomes/Results

- ↑ Water safety skills, comfort, and confidence in the water.
- ↑ Improved physical fitness, social skills, and self-esteem for participants.
- ↑ Access to life-saving swimming skills for children with disabilities, and promotion of inclusion in aquatics and recreational activities.

Facilitators

Julie Stoner, PhD, MPH

Community Partners

- ODU Recreation & Wellness

Student Activities

- Students will volunteer at monthly swim classes helping to guide participants through class activities and exercises.
- Student volunteers will be paired up with 1-2 class participant(s), review their modification plan and goals, and help guide them through the program.
- Students will learn about developmental differences in pediatric populations.
- Gain skills to connect and communicate respectfully with individuals of all abilities including those with diverse intellectual and communication needs.



MACON & JOAN BROCK VIRGINIA HEALTH SCIENCES

Eastern Virginia Medical School

AT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY