



Statistic gives birth to swim school

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FOR THE NORTH COUNTY TIMES

CARLSBAD — Kids diving into the new Water Wise Swim School program at the Boys and Girls Club in Carlsbad don't have to tread water very long.

"Our program is goal-oriented so the kids can learn at their own rate," said program director Jeff Prior, the 38-year-old former world-class swimmer who established the school just a few weeks ago and already has some three-

dozen students splashing their way to the top.

"I was shocked," Prior said, after he learned that drowning was the second leading cause of injury-related U.S. deaths among children under 15.

This statistic, along with the fact that his life in the corporate world taught him he missed working with youngsters and swimming, led to his decision to do something about it.

"I'm telling parents they can let their kids take karate and all those other skills, but they

should teach them to swim first," said the Philadelphia native.

"Swimming really is a lifesaving skill.

"I learned to swim because my mother couldn't swim and she was terrified of the water," Prior said, "She said none of her kids were going to grow up like that."

His ability shone through high school swim meets and developed into international championship levels at UC Berke-

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ley, where he became captain of the swim team.

During this period, he was a medal winner in the 400-meter individual medley at the 1985 World University Games in Kobe, Japan, the 800-meter freestyle relay in the 1986 Goodwill Games — the first of these international meets — in Moscow, and the 400-meter individual medley at the 1987 Pan American Games in Indianapolis.

After coaching swimmers around Philadelphia and at Villanova University, he moved to San Diego State University in 1995 and began coaching at North Coast Aquatic, the internationally recognized swimming powerhouse that develops champions at all levels.

Prior took a swing at freelance writing — he wanted to give corporate life a try, and found a job about four years ago with a local biotech firm.

He decided last April to plunge back into swimming and teach youngsters aquatic survival.

So Prior and his wife, Jody, a former instructor at North Coast Aquatics, launched Water Wise Swim School with classes every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday at the Carlsbad Boys & Girls Club's indoor pool.

The 30-minute sessions are designed for children ages 5 to 13. Eight 30-minute ses-



Photos by JAMIE SCOTT LYTTLE / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Above, Jenna Wysocki, 4, plays during a swim lesson at the Water Wise Swim School at the Carlsbad Boys and Girls Club. Below, swim instructor Meredith King gives Jenna a lesson.



sions cost \$110.

"Ninety percent of the students we had in July have signed up again for August," he said. "I use the SwimAmerica progressions of teaching."

In this program, students develop at their own pace. As they reach goals defined by skill and technique, they advance to the next level of training.

There's more than swim-

ming ability involved, Prior said: "We used to go the Jersey shore and my mother couldn't go in the ocean. If you can swim, you can go to pool parties, play water polo and go into the ocean. It's also great exercise and it's a lifelong sport. It's something you can do no matter how old you are."

To contact Prior, call (760) 216-7946 or by visiting his Web site at waterwiseswimschool.com.