



QuEd up for Education

People and programs impacting our QCSD community

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Pfaff students jump into water safety program

QCSD partners with YMCA on initiative for 2nd graders.

By Gary Weckselblatt

One hundred Pfaff Elementary School 2nd graders had their first "Safety Around Water" experience Monday morning at the Upper Perkiomen Valley YMCA. And the first thing Michael Tannous, the Y's executive director, observed was the students' enthusiasm.

"The kids are much more excited than we thought we'd see," Mr. Tannous said. "There's much less fear, anxiousness or nervousness than I anticipated. That's the first thing we noticed, a lot of excitement."

The Quakertown Community School District is partnering with the YMCA to have all 2nd graders participate in a "Safety Around Water" program. These are not swimming lessons. Rather, they're a way to teach water safety skills to help prevent drowning, a significant cause of death for children.

Pfaff and Trumbauersville students will receive this month's training in Upper Perk. Students from Neidig, Quakertown and Richland students will travel to the Quakertown Y.

On Monday, Tannous had 20 staff members, including lifeguards, in the pool area with students. Pfaff teachers also got in the water with

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special education students to help them enjoy the experience. "That was wonderful," Mr. Tannous said. "The kids were very happy."

Students rotated between two pools. Some took turns jumping in. Others were taught that if they fell in, how to turn, grab the side of the pool and float. "The idea is to get them in the water so the experience is not foreign to them," Mr. Tannous said.

Jason Erk, a Pfaff Teacher On Special Assignment (TOSA), said the program "is a great opportunity for every 2nd grader to get exposure to water. Some of these kids, maybe, don't go to a summer pool. This experience could come in handy."

According to the National SAFE KIDS Campaign and the National Safety Council:

- Approximately 830 children ages 14 and under drown every year. Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional death in children ages 1 to 4 years and ages 10 to 14 years.
- An average of about 3,600 injuries a year occur to children due to a near-drowning incident.

"Drowning is one of leading causes of death for children," Mr. Tannous said. "The Quakertown Community School District has a wonderful opportunity to take advantage, for free, of the great legacy of the YMCA, with its premier instructors of safety around water."

Cameron Baker, the Y's Advanced Aquatics Director, said youngsters are typically "nervous or more reserved" than what he saw from Pfaff's students. "It was great to see the confidence they had," he said.

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