

COMMUNITY HEALTH

August 2013

The YMCA of Martha's Vineyard is a non-profit, cause-driven, charitable organization that relies on the generous support of friends like you.

WE'RE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

SO OUR KIDS CAN STAY WATER SAFE AND BEACH READY



Keeping kids SAFE

So parents and kids can enjoy the pools and beaches of Martha's Vineyard.

According to the Center for Disease Control, approximately ten people die from unintentional drowning every day in the U.S. Two of the ten are children aged 14 or younger. According to a recent CDC's report, "Drowning ranks fifth among the leading causes of unintentional injury and death in the United States."

For the Island, drowning risks can mean a loosely supervised child wading too far into the ocean. Or a toddler falling into an unattended pool. Or a non-swimming teen falling off a boat. Perhaps a flotation device is too old or unreliable or not apt for the body type of the swimmer. Or not used at all. An experienced swimmer can become fatigued while far out in the surf or become mired in one of the Island's famous rip tides.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The YMCA of Martha's Vineyard is all about keeping Island mermaids, mer-matrons, mermen, and mer-tots safe – and we try to approach that from every angle. One of the main factors that affect drowning risks is lack of swimming ability. During the off-season, the Y offers formal Learn to Swim programs that begin at age 6 months and continue well into the adult years. Private and semi-private lessons are available by appointment.

We also recognize that, by necessity, our commitment to water safety needs to extend beyond our membership. During November and December, each Island 3rd grader spends four hours at the Y learning water safety skills that range from reducing their own risk in pools, at beaches, and on boats, through the correct and effective use of Personal Floatation Devices (PFDs) to reaching for a swimmer in trouble without jeopardizing their own safety.

TIPS FOR KEEPING YOUR FAMILY SAFE:

Water safety doesn't have to be learned in a formal program. Parents, guardians, and other responsible adults can ensure a child's (and their own) safety by following a few rules. David Espindle, Aquatics Director for the Y elaborates. "We have guidelines we call, 'When do we never swim.'" These include:

Never swim alone. David insists that this is Rule #1. "I don't even swim alone," he admits. Whether child or adult, use the buddy system.

Don't swim when there's thunder and lightning. This applies in pools as well as at the beach. "If there's a storm over the Y, we clear the pool."

No matter how experienced a swimmer you are, don't swim in water that's too rough. Especially on the beaches of MV, steer clear of high waves and rip tides.

Don't swim in cloudy pool water. "If you can't see the bottom of the pool, don't go in," David advises. It's not just a matter of iffy water quality. It's difficult to know if someone is swimming beneath you or close by.

Don't swim while eating. This increases the risk of choking.

SAFETY ON THE BEACH

It's easy to fall into a false sense of security on vacation. The water seems benign, or there's a lifeguard close by. Junior's an experienced swimmer and Baby Hannah is playing happily in the sand. That beach novel is right at your fingertips. But it takes only a moment of distraction for tragedy to strike.

David recommends that parents **set up in front of or close by a lifeguard.** "The closer you are, the easier it is for him or her to help" he explains. That said, realize that the lifeguard is watching over a large area of beach and cannot keep constant watch on every child. "Stay involved when at the beach with children, and the closer to the guards the better." David adds.

If the child is not a strong swimmer, he or she should be wearing a Personal Floatation Device.

Be aware that air-filled or foam toys (water-wings, noodles, inner tubes) are **not** PFDs. "We don't allow air-filled floatation devices in the pool at the Y," David says. "If they pop, you're on the spot."

Be knowledgeable of the body of water. Are there strong currents? Waves too high or choppy? Is there a rip tide close by? How quickly do the tides change?

Learn to navigate a rip tide or rip current. This is good advice for adults and children. The best way, of course, is to be aware of where they are and avoid them (look for a strip of choppy water in otherwise calm seas), but if caught, the best strategy is to swim (or walk) parallel to the shore and, once free, swim diagonally toward the shore.

Do not allow children to assist a swimmer in trouble. "That's where problems start," David insists. "Alert the lifeguard on duty." Whenever possible, says David, "Allow a person with training to do it!"

As we all know, living on an island presents many challenges for our children, especially those who cannot swim. This is why it is so important that we teach our children water safety tips. At the Y, we do our best to ensure that children can demonstrate confidence and safety while having fun in the water.

SHARING OUR STORIES

"I put on a bright orange life jacket and hopped in the clear water and played for a bit. We learned how to stay warm in the water which was really cool. I also learned how to save someone who is drowning. There is a little poem that goes with it: "Reach or throw but never go". I thought the field trip was the best field trip ever!"

Annabelle, Tisbury 3rd Grade



UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Summer Session II Program Dates:
July 29 - August 24

YOUTH PROGRAMS
Through August

Camp Terra Mare

9am - 4pm, M-F, Ages 5-16
Limited Space - Enroll Today!

8/12-26: Basketball Clinic, 9-11 am

ALL AGES EVENTS!

OPEN STAGE

Every Friday Night
9pm @ Alex's Place, \$5

COMEDY IMPROV

Every Thursday Night
8pm @ Alex's Place
Adults \$15, Teens \$11

7/27: Philly D and Special Guests
9pm, @ Alex's Place, \$10

7/28: Faster Freestyle Swim Clinic
2-5pm, with 2012 World Masters
Swimmer of the year Karlyn Pipes

8/3: Meghan LaRoque Live in Concert
9pm, @ Alex's Place, \$10

8/10: Ellis Paul Live in Concert
9pm, @ Alex's Place, \$10

8/17: Olympic Swim Clinic & Luncheon
With two Olympic swimmers
Clinic 9-12, luncheon 1-3
12 & under group, 12+ group

8/19: Fall program registration starts

View our program guide and calendar



WHAT DO OVER 1,000 KIDS LEARN AT THE Y ?
WATER SAFETY.



YMCA OF MARTHA'S VINEYARD
SWARTZ FAMILY FACILITY
Home of Alex's Place

111R Edgartown Vineyard Haven Road, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568
P 508.696.7171 F 508.696.6806 www.ymcamv.org

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