

Las Sendas Up Close

Bringing neighbors closer to their community

July 2011

Toddlers Learn Self-Rescue Skills at Las Sendas Pools

By AnnElise Makin

For the last six years or so, Becky Harris, from Infant Swimming Resource (ISR), has made poolside living safer for toddlers and preschoolers by teaching young children water self-rescue skills.

Some families in this neighborhood have participated in the six-week, 10-minute-a-day boot camps for multiple years. Becky, all wrapped in sun protective garments, has become a familiar sight at Las Sendas pools.

"Make another stroke, do this a little more! No, wait, I said to wait, jump on two! Nice job, Jackson!" This is how Becky encouraged Jackson to trust himself. Today, Jackson was almost scared to tears, but after repeated float-and-dock exercises, he lightened up, and wanted to learn more swimming tricks.

Jackson White, who is 3 years old, has trained with Becky for three weeks this season. He took five weeks of instruction in the previous year. Jackson's fear of water came from a near calamity.

"Jackson fell in a pool at a birthday party," said his mom, Katie White. "It was a crowded pool, and I looked away for only a second. Nobody saw him go under." Fortunately, Katie managed



to pull Jackson out in time.

Initially, Jackson cried a lot when challenged to move through the water, and tried to dodge this water training. But after the third lesson, he began to love it. Now, he can't wait to come to ISR classes.

As Jackson has learned to enjoy the exercises, his big sister, Kennedy, 5 years old, now swims like a pro. She started with Becky at 6 months of age. Since then, she has graduated from the program to take general swimming lessons.

No one has more fun at ISR than the Oglesby brothers, from Las Sendas. Tanner, who is 4 years old, and Mason, who is 3 years old, each began training

with Becky at 8 months old. "We saw an ad in the Las Sendas newspaper," recalled their mother, Lisa. The Oglesbys wanted to make their summer splashes as safe as they could be.

"Our boys have practiced floating since they were babies," Lisa reported. "Now, they are learning freestyle." They have had to float with winter clothes and shoes on. When they were little, Becky put one on top of the other to teach them how to separate from each other and float to the edge of the pool.

Clearly, Tanner can now swim across the breadth of the pool. Mason also can get himself floated to safety from any point. Neither is afraid of the deep water any more. The Oglesbys boys respect the water, and have learned to manage it well.

"These two little boys are some of the best," Becky said, praising them after the lesson. Tanner made for such a good picture, Becky put him on her business card.

Summers get really busy for Becky. This year, the ISR instructor has taught 20 little children in

Las Sendas, plus another 30 students in various locations. During the cooler months, Becky works at heated pools in the Valley and in Flagstaff.

Becky came to ISR, like so many of her students, through a convincing experience. When Becky was a nanny,

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ARIZONA AQUA STARS compete nationally

By Dawn Abbey

A pair of Mesa Arizona Aqua Stars (AAS) synchronized swim teams won gold medals at the USA Synchro Region D Championships Meet in Las Vegas in May, and have advanced to compete in the national meet in Seattle this month.

"Not only are we the No. 1 Team in the state, but we are also the only team in Arizona to have swimmers qualify for National Teams," exclaimed team recruiter TerriLynne Collins.

The qualifying swimmers are Eryn Schmisser (11/12) and Monica Velasquez-Stiak (13/15). Both girls will attend a national training camp for potential future members of U.S. National Team 1, which represents the U.S. at the Olympics and other international competitions. "Also, we are proud that Aimee Liou, Lindsey Anderson

and Sydney Schmisser qualified and attended National Team trials," TerriLynne said.

"Synchronized swimming is a unique combination of swimming, dance and gymnastics performed in water to music," she



further explained. The Aqua Stars club offers girls' swimming in teams, from ages 8 to 18, through classes and summer camps.

The girls train at Kino Aquatic Center, located at 850 N. Horne. The center is under the direction of head coach Jill Parr, who has been named

2008 West Zone Coach of the Year, 2009 13-15 National Team Assistant Coach and 2010 Junior Team Development Coach of the Year. The local coaching staff all are former nationally ranked swimmers.

"This nationally recognized, local year-round club is an independent, non-profit organization operated by the Arizona Aqua Star Parent Association," said TerriLynne.

Linda Witter started AAS in 1983. Linda is the current head coach of the Ohio State Collegiate National Champions, and former head coach of the U.S. Olympic Synchronized Swimming Team.

Registration is now open for classes and summer camps. Classes and clinics are available for all ages and proficiency levels. Girls should be 6 years or older, possess basic swimming skills and feel comfortable in deep water without a flotation device. ■

To register, call TerriLynne at (480) 654-8508, or send an e-mail to collins_526@msn.com. Further information can be found at www.azaquastars.org.

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