

## **A History of Swimming Safety**

Swimming and aquatics have long been associated with the YMCA, and tens of millions of people across the country learned how to swim at the Y. The first reported YMCA swimming bath was built at the Brooklyn Central YMCA in 1885 and by the end of that year 17 Y's across the country offered bathing services. In 1909 Ray L. Rayburn invented the idea of the roll-out rim which allowed for recirculation and filtration of water and the first system was installed at the Kansas City Y.

1909 was an important year in the aquatics field as it also saw the development of the first group swimming lessons. George Corson at the Detroit YMCA developed a system to teach swimming strokes on land, starting with the crawl stroke first, as a confidence builder. Corson's learn-to-swim campaigns resulted in the first campaign to teach every boy in the United States and Canada how to swim. Corson pioneered radical breathing methods, and he was the first instructor to teach beginning swimmers the crawl stroke instead of the breaststroke

According to the YUSA history at glance publication there were more than 1 million swimmers a year at YMCAs by 1932. A Springfield College student, George Goss, wrote the first American book on lifesaving in 1913 as a thesis. The YMCA Swimming and Lifesaving Manual, published in 1919, was one of the earliest works on the subject. Even the military used YMCA swim instruction techniques. In World War I, the Army used mass land drills to teach doughboys. In 1943, Dr. Thomas K. Cureton, chairman of the YMCA National Aquatic Committee, published Warfare Aquatics, which was widely used by the armed forces.

The innovation continues with the national launch of new swim lesson curriculum. Drowning is the second leading cause of death of children and a 2014 study by the CDC found that the rate of drowning in swimming pools for African – American kids and teens between ages 5 and 19 is more than five times that of white children. They also found that 45% of the Hispanic population have little to no swimming experience. The new curriculum focuses on the safety aspects of swimming with the knowledge that 88% of child drownings occurred with an adult present but unable to make a difference. The Jump, Push, Turn and Grab skill allows children to save themselves during the first critical moments. New parent resources allow the parents to understanding the lesson and continue instruction outside formal class. Even the class names have changed to better align with Red Cross lessons and make the progressions easier for parents to understand. We are excited to have a Certified Swim Lesson Instructor Trainer on staff and are busy training our staff on the new curriculum. Our ultimate goal is to ensure all kids have an opportunity to learn the skills to keep them safe in and around water. It's a lifesaver!

