



“THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK”  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

THOMAS M. ROACH  
MAYOR

t: 914.422.1411  
f: 914.422.1395

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Contact: Wayne Bass  
Commissioner, Recreation & Parks Dept.  
Tel: (914) 422-1336  
[wbass@whiteplainsny.gov](mailto:wbass@whiteplainsny.gov)

## **WHITE PLAINS COMPLETES ITS 6<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL JUMP IN AND SWIM PROGRAM 6<sup>th</sup> Graders Get Lessons in Swimming, Water Safety**

**WHITE PLAINS, NY – July 22, 2019.** Thirty-one 6<sup>th</sup> grade students from Eastview Middle School in White Plains who had identified themselves as non-swimmers took the plunge recently at the White Plains High School pool as part of the City of White Plains Jump In and Swim Initiative. The students participated in a free learn to swim program over the course of two weeks in which they learned about water safety and swimming fundamentals during the school day.

Mayor Tom Roach, who created this initiative six years ago said, “In White Plains we invest in our youth. We know that participation in formal swimming lessons can significantly reduce the risk of drowning. By offering basic instruction we can provide an essential life skill to our youth, help prevent drownings, and save lives.”

Frank Williams, Director of the White Plains Youth Bureau added, “The statistics speak for themselves: 70% of African American children and nearly 60% of Hispanic children have low or no swim ability. Approximately 10 people drown every day in the U.S. More than one in five fatal drowning victims are children younger than 14. African-American children drown at a rate nearly three times higher than their Caucasian peers. If a parent does not know how to swim, there is only a 13 percent chance that a child in that household will learn how to swim.”

(More)



“THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK”  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

THOMAS M. ROACH  
MAYOR

t: 914.422.1411  
f: 914.422.1395

In recent years, the committee has created excitement around swimming by bringing in Olympic swimmers to meet with students and talk about their sport and the importance of water safety. In addition, the City’s partners in this initiative have provided free programming which has included basic swim skills and water safety activities. While reviewing the prior year’s program and brainstorming on how the committee could extend its reach, Patti Gilmartin, Aquatic and Swim Coach at White Plains High School observed that in her experience an average of 33% (or about 160 students in each freshman class) don’t know how to swim. This information led the committee and its chair, Recreation and Parks Commissioner Wayne Bass, to re-formulate its approach to Jump In and Swim. “We knew we had to focus more attention on identifying non-swimmers and increasing the number of students who enter White Plains High School with basic swim and water safety skills,” said Recreation & Parks Commissioner Wayne Bass. “We made the decision to start chipping away at that 33% non-swimmer number.”

The committee includes representatives from White Plains Public Schools, YWCA of White Plains, City of White Plains Recreation and Parks Department and the White Plains Youth Bureau.

Working in cooperation with the administration at White Plains Public Schools the committee targeted non-swimmers in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade class at Eastview Middle School. A Pep Rally was held to introduce students to this initiative and motivate them to participate and included a short-film presentation. The event was attended by Mayor Tom Roach and Dr. Joseph Ricca, Superintendent of White Plains Public Schools as well as the White Plains Tiger mascot.

The program participants met 4 times during the month of June with Aquatic and Swim Coach, Patti Gilmartin, teacher and Aquatic Instructor, John Suman, and White Plains High School students who volunteered their time as swim instructors for this new Jump in and Swim Initiative.

(More)



“THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK”  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

THOMAS M. ROACH  
MAYOR

t: 914.422.1411  
f: 914.422.1395

This group of 6<sup>th</sup> graders eagerly began their journey towards learning the basics of swimming. A safe and supportive environment was provided for these beginner swimmers and the students were equipped with water safety skills that could one day save their lives. They learned to tread water, kick, swim free style and back stroke, swim underwater and float. Most of all, they had fun, made new friends outside the classroom, and gained confidence in and around the water, which is essential to water safety.

On the last day of the program the students displayed their newly-learned skills and participated in relay races. All students received backpacks which were provided by the Brian M. Robinson Foundation and were awarded a Swim Certificate for completing the Jump in and Swim Initiative.

The students made continuous progress throughout the program and will carry these fundamental swim skills with them throughout their life. Dr. Ricca observed, “This program was another shining example of the amazing partnership that exists between the city and the schools. In White Plains our kids come first. Jump in and Swim gave our children the chance to learn the essential life skill of swimming in a fun and safe manner. This effort was a complete success.”

###