

Swim for Charlie and Partners Duke University and Durham Public Schools Deliver Water Safety Instruction to at risk Kids

Swim for Charlie's mission is to improve water safety in young children and decrease the risk of childhood drowning.

DURHAM, NC, UNITED STATES, April 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Swim](#) for Charlie, a non-profit organization created in memory of physician philanthropist Dr. Charlie van der Horst, recently gathered with partners Duke University and Durham Public Schools at Duke University's Brodie Aquatics Center to celebrate their collaboration, which has delivered [water safety](#) instruction to 532 DPS students from 8 schools since the fall of 2023.



Front (l-r) - Cliff Merritt, Tanya Giovanni, Tiffany Boss, Kimberly Ferrell. Back - Jim Tucker, Vincent Price, Laura Svetkey, Jon Klein, Anthony Lewis, Felicia Tittle, Chris Policastro. Photo Credit: Alec Himwich

In attendance were the organizational leaders of this collaboration: Swim for Charlie President Dr. Jon Klein; Duke University President Dr. Vincent Price; Superintendent of Durham Public Schools, Dr. Anthony Lewis, special guest, Charlie van der Horst's widow, Dr. Laura Svetkey; Professor Emeritus of Medicine, Duke University; and their staff members.

“

...move beyond that unfathomable pain, and embrace life with a passionate fierceness.”

Dr. Charlie van der Horst

Swim for Charlie's mission is to improve water safety in young children and decrease the risk of childhood drowning, which is the 2nd leading cause of death in children. The program is free to 100% of Durham Public School 2nd grade students and boasts a participation rate of ~ 90% and a completion rate of over 95%. After instruction, 55+% of early learners can move from a front

to a back float and pull themselves out of the water to exit the [pool](#), while 75% have advanced at least 1 level.

DPS Assistant Principal Dr. Kimberly Farrell notes, "What we are really amazed to see is that our teachers and parents note that the students have lower absenteeism during the SFC program and display more confidence in the classroom after their time in the pool spent learning water safety skills. It's incredible!"

"It takes thousands of volunteers to make our kids water safe. We create and partner with a network of schools, pools, and swim instructor volunteers to teach Durham 2nd grade kids water safety in eight instructor lead sessions delivered over two weeks," explains Jon Klein, President of Swim for Charlie.

SFC currently operates in Durham County Schools and Orange County Schools and partners with a network of eight pools – Duke University's Brodie Aquatics Center is one of the eight pool partners.

Jon adds, "It would be impossible to deliver this program without our partners, and we are very grateful to be able to say that with the collaboration of our entire network, we have delivered water safety instruction to 3,800 DPS and OCS students from 27 schools hosted at eight different pools with the support of 120+ community instructors in the past 4 years."

About Swim for Charlie:

Swim for Charlie's (SFC) mission is to equip children with life-saving water safety skills by providing a high-quality water safety program to second grade North Carolina students. Our vision is for every child to have the opportunity to learn how to be safe in and around the water.

Please visit www.swimforcharlie.org to learn more about us. Please contact Tanyss Mason if you are a NC public school interested in bringing SFC to your school, or a pool wanting to host the program at your facility, or a volunteer interested in how to donate your time to this effort to our program.

Media Contact:

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