Florida Swim Voucher Celebration to Register Newly Eligible Youth: September 13 in St. Augustine

The First Coast YMCA and The Safe Swimmers Project will help newly eligible families access swim vouchers that now cover youth up to age 7.


Will Moffett Teaching West Augustine Kids To Swim

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL, UNITED STATES, September 10, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- The First Coast YMCA and The Safe Swimmers Project will host a swim voucher celebration and registration event on Sunday, September 13, at 1:30 p.m. at the Willie Galimore Pool, operated by The First Coast YMCA, at 399 Riberia St., St. Augustine, Florida. The family-friendly event will celebrate the opening of Florida's Swim Voucher Program and provide on-site assistance for completing voucher applications.

The newly enacted state program, established through Senate Bill 428/House Bill 85, unanimously passed both Florida chambers (108-0 in the House and 36-0 in the Senate), and was signed by Governor Ron DeSantis on April 21, 2026. The bill became a major statewide initiative and a Florida TaxWatch top 10 legislative priority for 2026, as drowning is the leading cause of death for Florida children.

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>
> *Florida Senator Clay Yarborough*

The law now provides access to swim instruction for under-resourced and autistic children up to age 7. Previously, state voucher eligibility was cut off at age 4, leaving older under-resourced children vulnerable. Many under-resourced children, including those with autism, tend to learn to swim after age 4.

“This law will provide greater access to life-saving swim education for a broader group of children, addressing a critical gap in the current program,” said Florida Representative Kim Kendall. Florida Senator Clay Yarborough stated, "Protecting our children transcends politics, as shown by the unanimous, bipartisan support this legislation received in both chambers. By providing access to swim instruction to those up to age 7 and prioritizing autistic youth, we are closing a critical gap in water safety."

“Drownings can happen in a matter of seconds, making early water safety education an absolute necessity,” said Delonyx Cortez, Vice President of Operations for the First Coast YMCA. “Florida is now giving the YMCA and other providers the tools we need to eliminate financial barriers and ensure every child has the opportunity to learn life-saving swimming skills.”

The legislation was initiated following the work and advocacy of 16-year-old Will Moffett. While volunteering over the last several years as a swim instructor serving under-resourced children in West Augustine, Moffett saw firsthand how previous eligibility restrictions left behind many elementary-aged children. During the September 13 event, Florida Representative Kim Kendall will present Will Moffett with an official State of Florida Tribute award to honor him for “stepping forward to share his ideas, advocate for meaningful change, and work alongside legislators to help shape public policy.” She added, “We are deeply grateful for Will’s initiative and relentless advocacy, which formed this policy and will protect Florida's children for generations to come.”

“The new law gives elementary-aged students the skills they need to stay safe around water,” said Moffett. “We are grateful for the support of our local leaders, Florida Representative Kim Kendall and Florida Senator Clay Yarborough. They filed the initial bills, and we aggressively advocated for Florida’s children through to the final vote. Receiving this official state Tribute is an incredible honor, while the most meaningful outcome is that thousands of children each year will now be safe in the water.”

Eligible families with household incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level may receive vouchers.

Event Details

* When: Sunday, September 13, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

* Where: Willie Galimore Pool, 399 Riberia St., St. Augustine, FL

* Requirements: Families should bring proof of Florida residency and Medicaid numbers to expedite applications.

Families unable to attend can apply online via the Florida Department of Health or contact The Safe Swimmers Project.

The Safe Swimmers Project was selected by Youth Service America/AmeriCorps/9-11 Day to receive an award grant for the event, supporting the organization’s efforts to engage youth in service and water-safety education. The event will recognize the September 11 National Day of Service, while The Safe Swimmers Project has recruited approximately 100 youth volunteers for all aspects of the event.

About The Safe Swimmers Project
The Safe Swimmers is dedicated to eliminating barriers to swimming instruction and expanding access to water-safety education for under-resourced communities. Learn more at SafeSwimmers.org.

About the YMCA
The Y is dedicated to providing comprehensive programs and services that enrich communities - and all of the people who live in them - across the country in fulfillment of our mission. Visit ymca.org

Delonyx Cortez, YMCA /Marcy Russo, The Safe Swimmers Project
The YMCA and The Safe Swimmers Project

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