

West Seattle FamilyYMCA

Partners With Youth Success Stories

Strong Youth

Swimming Teaches Kids Valuable Life Lessons:

Bonnie Alvarez can remember the exact moment she decided to enroll her kids in YMCA Swim Lessons, two years ago. "My son Ethan was at a pool party with his tee-ball team; all the other kids were happily playing in the shallow end, and here comes Ethan, barreling out of the dressing room and diving right into the deep end, with all the lifeguards right behind him!"

Ethan, age 6, has a form of autism; one of its effects is that he has no personal fear. Bonnie knew that she'd better get him some lessons so that next time he did that headlong dash into the pool, he'd be able to swim.

"I'm a single mom on disability...there was no money for swim lessons. Ann (Adkins, Aquatics Director) lovingly gave us the scholarships so my kids could learn to swim." Bonnie's other children, Josh (age 8) and Isabella (age 3) have also been learning to swim at the Y, all with financial assistance through the Partners With Youth campaign.

"Ethan has discovered accomplishment - he knows he's different but doesn't really know what it is," said Bonnie. "It took him so long to get out of 'Guppy (lessons)'; when he finally did it, I'd never seen him with such a straight back and big smile. He was so proud of himself."

Ethan participated in swimming lessons, thanks to support from the Partners With Youth Campaign. Through the life changing experience of learning to swim, Ethan's story reveals benefits beyond the simple fun and accomplishment that every child deserves.

Strong Youth - In the News

["Learning doesn't take a summer vacation"](#)

["Ties as lifelines, not just neckwear"](#)

Seattle Times, May 22, 2005

Supporting Families

Planting the seeds of possibility, one family at a time.

As a 4 year olds, Oisin (pronounced ee-shun) would walk by West Seattle Family YMCA's Preschool Child Care with her mom. They lived in the apartments across the street. As they passed by, Oisin would look in the windows at the kids in the classroom, playing, reading, and singing. Each time, she would ask her mom whether she could go to school there because if "looks like so much fun".

Petina, Oisin's mom, told her she wasn't sure. Even with dad working full time and mom working a little part time, money was tight in the household. Petina didn't think she could afford it, but "I wanted her to be doing something structured, educational and positive with other kids".

After thinking about it, Petina stopped by and talked with Karen Norbeck, the Preschool Director. She found out about the YMCA's financial assistance from Partners With Youth funds, and how the Y could help her family afford the costs.

Oisin got her wish. In short time, the program has become a significant part of their family life. Stories at dinner are about the activities of the day - the games they played, their swimming lessons. "My daughter loves this preschool. She's blossomed here. She has made a lot of friends and learned so much about getting along. It's so important to us, but we couldn't afford it without the help".

Since Oisin started, Petina has been able to take on a few more hours at work, and the family moved to a new apartment. Even though they don't live across the street anymore, coming to the Y is still an everyday activity, and "Oisin looks forward to the preschool class. We love how much fun she has and how she's grown."

YMCA financial assistance for child care, as well as funding for supportive family programs, is made possible by the Partners With Youth Campaign. This testimonial from an West Seattle parent reveals the changing face of our community and the positive impact of the YMCA.

Supporting Families - In the News

["Special moms get special care at Y's car clinic"](#)

Seattle Times, May 10, 2005

["Cooking classes encourage healthy eating"](#)

Parent Map, May 2005

["YMCA programs help build Bellevue communities"](#)

King County Journal, February 2, 2005