



WHYWATER?

courtney MCLAURIN

Evergreen Swims

Courtney McLaurin owns Evergreen Swims, meeting the aquatic needs of our community in a warm water, toxin free pool designed with a river mimicking current. After 25 years of moving all over the world with the military, Evergreen is the best. Her passion is to let the water work for you and keep you doing the activities you love. She is certified through the Aquatic Therapy and Rehabilitative Institute, Aquatic Exercise Association and American Swim Coaches Association. Contact her at evergreenswims@gmail.com or 720.432.5240

You can't hold back the water—but you can swim with the current.

—Wallace J. Nichols

Author of “The Blue Mind” and Blue Mind Life Movement

Fear: a word used too frequently in relation to water. It breaks my heart for adults who have it and the children who will likely inherit some level of it. When a child comes to us fearful after lessons, I am convicted that I once subscribed to the traditional methods of our “learn to swim” mentality. I think swim instructors fail to respect our role to initiate this grand thing into a child’s life. Water

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brings peace, creativity, healing, awe, life source and so much more. Limiting swimming to strokes and survival restricts children’s view of all water can offer their spirits, hearts and physical health for a lifetime.

A parent came requesting a “break-through” for their child to achieve a level set by a popular swim school in town. If they just got this one skill down they could move up. We end every class with “Rivertime” using

our current to practice, predict and learn river safety skills. As soon as that current came on, this client deemed “water safe” panicked! Taking it step-by-step, he was able to gain confidence and use swim skills in an uncertain setting. After this success, the parent said, “Great! But when will they achieve that one skill?” This represents many parents including my former self. We all see swimming this way. Hearts for this approach are good but are missing the mark. How long until they are water safe? Never. None of us truly are. Just as we are never truly hiking safe or bike riding safe. We should learn to swim as we learn to walk, run, write or read... a life skill that evolves over time with personal interest, be it competitive or fun.

There are two essentials Evergreen Swims builds upon for a lifetime of love and respect for our waters. First, trust in who initiates you to water equals trust of the water. This can be a parent at an infant class or a swim teacher. Often, due to time restrictions or industry imposed levels, we marginalize swim programs at the great expense of trust. I honor getting more children exposed to water safety skills. However, introducing your child to water is not the equivalent to another after school activity like dance or sports. They miss respect for and initiation into something that inhabits 70 percent of their earth and 100 percent of their lives.

The second essential is breath control as the basis of all things related to water. Panic is the No. 1 reason drowning occurs. Learning to get to air and use deep diaphragm breaths (instead of shallow chest breaths) in the water is essential to safety and enjoyment. It allows

us to work with the water’s dynamics rather than fight against it. Our mind calms and we are able to think more clearly. Most kids come to us from other programs proudly gulping in air then blowing fast and furious bubbles.



Panic looks a lot like this type of breathing. When they find themselves in colder, unpredictable water, this is what they know to fall back on.

Unpredictable setting is our test of when skills are mastered. Traditionally, we learn to swim in controlled settings with calm, warm water. Being told skills are “mastered,” we go about our life alongside water feeling better. As a short and muscular competitive swimmer, technique was key and my stroke was always referred to as “beautiful and powerful.” When I fell out of a raft on a Class 3 rapid, wiped out in the surf or felt strong currents scuba diving, I wasn’t thinking about my streamline. My natural instinct was to stay calm, get air and breathe because it’s what I’d taught myself.

Infants in Water

We are one of the only countries that does not get babies in the water before 6 months of age. At the Sheba Medical Center in Israel,

Hydrotherapy Director Caroline Barmatz, my colleague and friend, documents tremendous improvement for NICU infants. Commercial swim schools in Ireland and England offer infant and parent bonding classes for newborns. Our fear of hypothermia, contracting a communicable disease or water intoxication (reaction from swallowing too much water common in more forceful infant programs) is one reason we hesitate. Assuming they are too young to learn traditional skills is another reason we miss this valuable opportunity. Evergreen Swims’ vision of swimming for all stages of life offers a safe and warm setting to introduce the trust and fun modeled after programs overseas and not the popular survival infant programs based on fear.

Water promotes bonding with skin to skin contact in a supported setting for both parent and baby. The dynamics of water immersion strengthens a baby’s heart and lungs as well as ignites the nervous system increasing mental and sensory function. As a Norwegian study found in 2009, babies who swim have better balance and coordination skills. Strength is a nice side effect with core muscles and tiny developing muscles being engaged more so in water. Finally, confidence and trust built early will translate to confidence later on. Your child’s as well as yours.

We **humbly** thank the Evergreen community for embracing our vision and nominating us for New Business of the Year 2017! We offer small classes and individual sessions for all ages, levels and interest.

Tell someone you wish them well this holiday season by saying instead, “I wish you water!” with a

\$100 Holiday Gift Certificate for \$90

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Say you saw it in Serenity.

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