



News from City of San Diego

**Council President Tony Young and Councilmember Sherri Lightner**

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## **Lifeguards seek help to ‘Fill the Fin’ for youth swim lessons**

SAN DIEGO, Calif. -- Teams of San Diego lifeguards are hitting the beaches with fins in hand as they launch a weeklong “Fill the Fin” campaign to raise money for much-needed swim lessons for inner city youth and to spread the message of water safety.

From Aug. 12 to Aug. 19, lifeguards are volunteering at city beaches to collect coins and dollars in their bright-colored rubber footwear to fund aquatic programs at the Jackie Robinson Family YMCA in southeastern San Diego.

“It is estimated that 33,000 children ages 5 to 12 who live in our service area have never taken swimming lessons to develop a healthy respect for the water. And most do not even have proper swimwear,” said the local Y’s Executive Director Michael Bruner.

With the help of elected officials and members of the San Diego Lifesaving Association, underserved kids from Skyline to City Heights may soon be better equipped with swimwear, aquatic safety training, and swimming lessons – as well as a more memorable summer.

“Many parents and kids in poor and minority neighborhoods haven’t grown up around water and don’t have access or the economic means for swim lessons,” said San Diego City Council President Tony Young. “That’s why they experience a disproportionately higher rate of drowning.”

In San Diego, drowning is the leading cause of non-natural death among children under 5, and rip currents, like the recent powerful ones in La Jolla Shores, are a dangerous reminder of the need to teach swimming and water safety to area youth.

According to City Lifeguard Sergeant Ed Harris, better targeted water safety messages and swimming lessons geared toward inner city kids can help reduce the number of tragedies.

“From our Junior Lifeguard to our Water Proofing programs, we are continually looking for ways to promote aquatic safety to underserved youth throughout the City of San Diego,” said Harris, noting that many beach-area businesses are sponsoring lifeguards in this year’s inaugural fundraising drive.

San Diego City Councilmember Sherri Lightner, who represents the La Jolla beach community and is a strong supporter of improved lifeguard staffing and training, also is teaming with lifeguards to send an urgent summer message about water safety and drowning prevention to swimmers, parents and caregivers.

“Our lifeguards do a great job but water safety is everyone’s responsibility,” Lightner said. “We all need to protect our youth and educate them about swim safety.”

San Diego residents and out-of-town beach visitors alike can donate money to the “Fill the Fin” campaign at lifeguard stations from Ocean Beach to Torrey Pines through Friday, Aug. 19. For collection site volunteer or business sponsorship opportunities, contact San Diego Lifesaving Association President Jeffrey Hatfield at (619) 944-4289 (or online at: [Facebook.com/FilltheFin](https://www.facebook.com/FilltheFin)).

Pledges of \$50 or more to provide a child with swim wear and lessons also can be made by calling the Jackie Robinson Family YMCA directly at (619) 264-0144.

For a listing of City of San Diego beaches and lifeguard services, call (619) 221-8899 or visit [sandiego.gov/lifeguards](http://sandiego.gov/lifeguards).

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