Swimming lessons are a YMCA heritage

By Kasey Hemington
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

Kasey is a Grade 9 student at Queen Elizabeth Park High School in Oakville. She recently spent a day at the YMCA in the Communications Department as part of Take Your Kid to Work Day and researched and wrote this article as part of her job that day. Kasey is currently training for her Bronze Cross Certification at the YMCA of Oakville.

Something most people don't realize about the YMCA is the great part it plays and has played in the role of the history of aquatics — swimming, teaching, learning, preventing drowning, and having fun in the water!

The YMCA built its first pool in 1888 in Toronto, and it hasn't stopped building even more pools and thousands of good, strong swimmers.

After the first pool was built, many people thought that swimming just distracted children from real physical work (exercise and gymnastics). They taught swimming out of the water using a dry land "rope and pulley" system. However, they eventually realized that swimming is good exercise in and of itself, and is great for building confidence, and improving drowning prevention skills.

POSTCARDS FROM THE Y

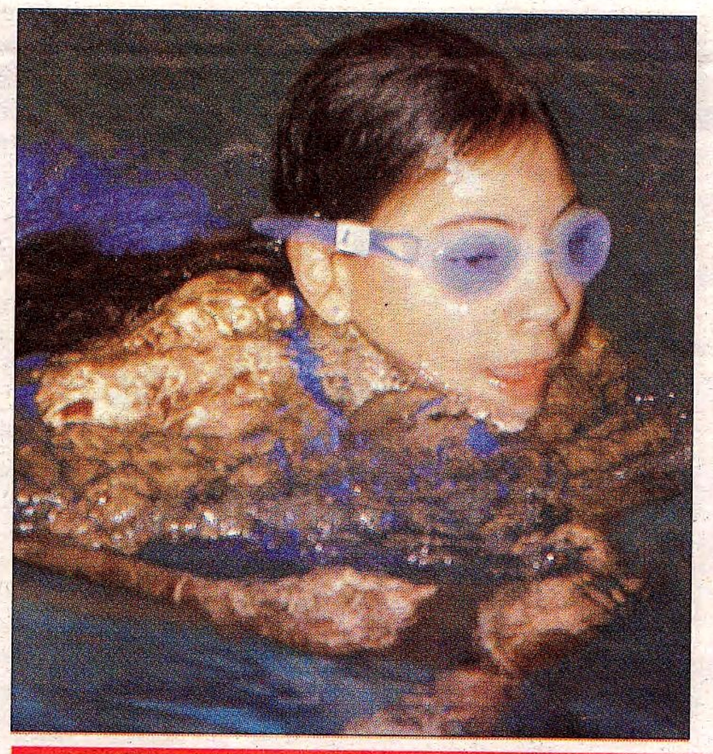
In fact, the YMCA started the first "learn-to-swim" campaign, which rewarded boys who could swim 50 feet, and was initiated by George Corsan in 1909. Today, anyone who has children enrolled in the aquatics program knows that the YMCA of Oakville follows this principle, rewarding children with colourful badges and stickers to entice them to improve their swimming skills and encourage them to take pride in their accomplishments.

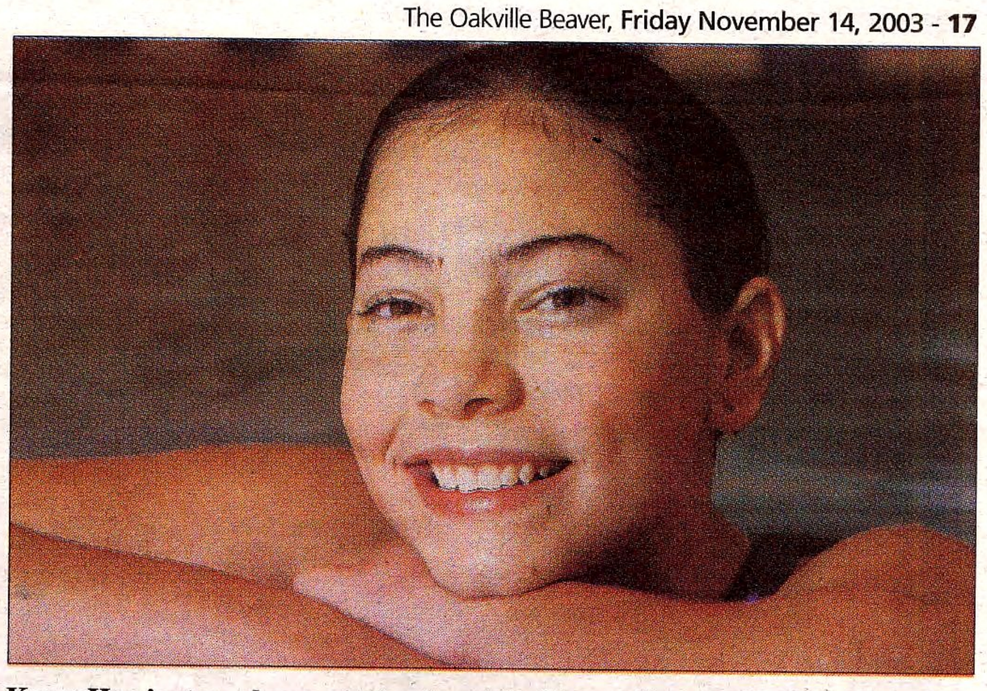
Corsan also developed a unique, new YMCA swimming technique, which taught swimming in groups, with land drills first executed to demonstrate proper methods. In fact, it was so effective that even the military used this method to prepare soldiers during the First World War. Corsan's style of teaching is the very one used in most swimming classes today, including those at the new YMCA of Oakville where more than 1,400 children participate in swimming lessons each week.

Swimming lessons at the YMCA are different than those elsewhere in Oakville, because they run continuously. You have the convenience to join in whenever you want, and you simply keep going until you achieve your goal.

Dianne Dillon, aquatics co-ordinator says, "We take pride in the Y's aquatic department…The Y is such a great community and facility for families."

She knows members appreciate the fact that all 32 aquatic staff are full of enthusiasm and team spirit. They have great communication skills, good first aid backgrounds and strong swimming skills. Dianne herself often fills in for swimming classes and "loves interacting with members" of the Y.





Kasey Hemington, above, spent a day at the Y recently as part of Take Your Kid to Work Day.

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