

Stouffville man puts kids in the swim

By DENISE McDONALD
It was the first rubber cheque to float, not bounce.

On Sunday, Jan. 10, Jack Buckler Aquatics Limited of Willowdale, presented a \$500 cheque, written on a rubber inner tube, to the Variety Village swimming pool fund.

"As Metro Toronto's largest private swimming school, we've had lots of experience in teaching children who are physically or mentally challenged how to swim. That's why we're glad to contribute towards the \$5.7 million cost of the Variety Village pool," said Gloria Buckler in a press release.

"We're also making the donation to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Jack Buckler Aquatics. It's our way of thanking the community for its support during our two decades of growth."

Founded in 1968

Mrs. Buckler, an RR4, Stouffville resident explained that Jack Buckler Aquatics was founded by her husband in 1968.

"After being employed by the borough for a number of years, Jack discovered he had a nice talent for working with children," she said. "He also realized you don't have to wait until a child is five-years-old before you can teach him/her to swim."

While taking Business Management at Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, he began working with handicapped children at the Hospital for Sick Children in a therapeutic pool, and also performed work at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry.

"One of the methods he developed met with enthusiastic response from members of the medical profession," said Mrs. Buckler. "As long as a child's spine was formed and he could sit up on his own, methods could be developed to put that child under water safely."

Combining municipal pool lessons, as well as private and volunteer, Mrs. Buckler said her husband eventually found his time becoming chaotic, working 80 to 100 hours a week. In 1968, it was decided to amalgamate programs in the Mississauga area by establishing the first of three pools that would be built. North York was established in 1972, with Scarborough's following in 1974.

"North York has a 75-foot pool with a water temperature of 92 degrees," said Mrs. Buckler. "The warm water is a nice thing for teaching the little ones because it eliminates shivering. As well, about 90 per cent of the pool is the same depth, so the instructors can use the whole width of the pool."

Mrs. Buckler claims her husband was particularly interested in the safety of children around water and advocated 'drownproofing,' being able to swim the length of the pool, (65 feet,) on front as well as back and tread water for one minute.

Hold their breath

"It acts as a form of insurance," she explained. "These days so many people have cottages, but they just can't keep their eyes on a child every second. Therefore, it's quite easy for a little one to drop off the edge of a dock when the parent turns his/her back for only a second."

"But with drownproofing, the child instantly knows to hold his/her breath, giving the individual 30 seconds to scoop the child up and put him/her back on the dock."

As well, Jack has developed and perfected ways of dealing with a variety of syndromes and phobias related to the water.

In 1977, two-year-old Matthew Martin was dragged from freezing water after being sub-



Young Mark Spitz

This little three-year-old has no fear of water, thanks to Jack Buckler's philosophy, once a child's spine has developed and he/she can sit up, they can be put safely under water. —Denise McDonald

merged for 20 minutes. He had thrown his mother's car into reverse and it rolled down an embankment into the family's pond.

"Jack came along and took him back into the water to continue his swimming education," said Mrs. Buckler. "He now has no fear of the water whatsoever."

Although children compose a large part of Jack Buckler's endeavors, teaching the handicap to swim is the foundation on which it's based.

"It's such a large part of why

Jack wanted to have his own business in the first place," she said. "When you put a mentally or physically challenged child in the water, their handicap becomes so much less visible."

"We had a little girl come in who had fallen out of a moving car and was left a quadriplegic," Mrs. Buckler continued.

"Thanks in part to a cooperative mother, Jack was able to teach the girl to propel herself with her hands, using them like fins, and swim the length of the pool."

"He works under the philosophy sometimes you have to be cold on the outside and warm on the inside, to cope with these children."

As well, Jack Buckler offers a full complement of swimming badges from tadpole up to Red Cross White and Royal Life Saving Society levels 1, 2 and 3.

"Our swimming lessons are definitely more than meets the eye," continued Mrs. Buckler. "They also help to improve skills, muscle tone and coordination, comprehension and discipline."

Have your say:

Are exams a fair measuring stick for determining student ability?



TRACEY SHORTIS

"No, because a lot of students have learned so much, but when they go in there and look at the paper, they get worried and forget everything."



GLENN BARBER

"No, because a person can be smart, yet blow an exam because they cracked under pressure."



KERRY WHITE

"Yes, because they show the ability of a student to remember and the ability of a teacher to have taught it well enough the student can apply it to the question."



PAT ALLES

"To some extent. However, I personally sometimes get a mental block because the setting really bothers me."