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For Immediate Release

Local Partnership Makes a Splash in Hopewell

The USA Swimming Foundation Make-A-Splash program was established to address alarming statistics. In ethnically diverse communities, the youth drowning rate is more than double the national average. Children from non-swimming households are eight times more likely to be at-risk of drowning.

The Hopewell Recreation Department and Virginia Association of Competitive Swimming has joined forces to provide free learn-to-swim classes as partners with the USA Swimming Foundation Make-A-Splash program. The Cameron Foundation has provided a grant to kick off the program this spring at Harry E. James Elementary School in Hopewell.

The classes will be provided through a local partnership agreement with USA Swimming, Hopewell Recreation Department, and the Virginia Association of Competitive Swimming (VACS) and in cooperation with Hopewell Public Schools. "When I was growing up I never had the opportunity to learn how to swim. I have always regretted not learning how to swim so I 'm very excited and grateful that the students at Harry E. James will get this wonderful opportunity," said Mrs. Morton, Principal-Harry E. James Elementary School.

A series of eight classes will be made available, at no cost, to approximately 100 third grade students. The goal is to reduce the drowning rate among children in diverse communities while also providing them with a skill that can promote physical fitness. Jamie Greenwood, Head Coach -VACS has over fifteen years of coaching experience and notes that, "Kids who learn to swim by age 8 go on to enjoy the sport of swimming for the rest of their lives."

The Hopewell Recreation Department and VACS plan to make this an ongoing program. Future projects will be funded through individual and group donations.

To sponsor swim lessons for a child visit www.swimvacs.org . To learn more about this national campaign visit www.swimfoundation.org . Community and civic organizations interested in joining this partnership, please contact Brad Flynn, Aquatics Superintendent, Hopewell Recreation Department at (804) 541-2353 or Jamie Greenwood, VACS Head Coach at (804) 937-5571.



USA Swimming Make A Splash program works through grassroots programs across the nation.

Motivated by the fact that African-American children drown at a rate almost three times higher than Caucasian children in similar age groups, Cullen Jones, the first African-American male to hold a world record in swimming, is using his fame to raise awareness on the issue.