


Local

YMCA offers water safety class to kids in need

 Paul Swiech / Pantagraph staff

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BLOOMINGTON — Bloomington-Normal YMCA will provide free Safety Around Water swim lessons in June to 75 children in need who have completed first grade.

The program will be 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. June 5 through 8 at the YMCA, 602 S. Main St., Bloomington. Safety Around Water is open to Bloomington District 87 students who have completed first grade and meet the criteria to receive free or reduced lunch.

The program is free because of a grant from Illinois Prairie Community Foundation.

"Swimming is not only a fun, healthy activity but an important life skill for all children," said Mandy Burge, YMCA Learn-to-Swim coordinator. Drowning is the second-leading cause of death for children ages 5 to 14.

"Learning basic water safety skills is a great introduction to the world of swimming that often continues with swim lessons and competitive swim programs and can even lead to a career," Burge said.

Registration for Safety Around Water is taking place in person at the YMCA.

Meanwhile, the YMCA offers these water safety tips for everyone:

- Only swim when there is a lifeguard on duty. Never swim alone.
- Adults should constantly watch their children around water. Young children should be within arm's reach.
- Inexperienced or non-swimmers should wear a Coast Guard-approved life jacket.
- No one should engage in breath-holding activities under water.

The YMCA has a variety of swimming programs, including Learn-to-Swim School, YMCA WAVES Swim Team and Water Exercise classes. Financial assistance is available to families in need. More information is at 309-827-6233 or at mburge@bnymca.org.