

South Florida swim experts hit the big time

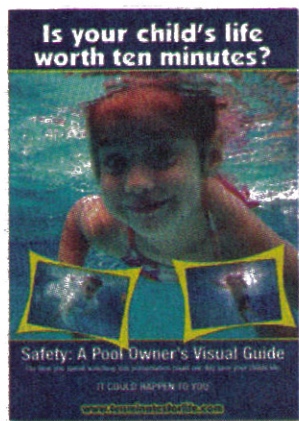
By Robyn A. Friedman

Learning to swim is necessary for any child, but it's of particular importance here in South Florida, where drowning is the most common cause of death in children ages 1 to 4. Two South Florida swim schools, which have been teaching young children to swim for many years, are now branching out into ventures that the owners hope will bring wider emphasis on pool safety and teaching toddlers to swim.

Pool safety DVD

Davie-based Baby Otter Swim School has been providing swimming lessons for children in Broward and Palm Beach counties for five years, although its co-owner, Marlene Bloom, has been teaching swimming to kids for about 30 years. The school recently created a DVD on pool and home safety titled "Safety: A Pool Owner's Visual Guide." In just 10 minutes, the video, which has been endorsed by the Broward County Health Department, guides parents and pool owners through the critical steps necessary to prevent or respond to a water-based emergency.

"There is so much water around us in Florida that it's scary," said Bloom. "We're trying to educate the parents and pool owners as much as possible, and we figured that



with a DVD we'd be able to do that."

Bloom started teaching swimming because of her own experiences with her daughter. "She had no fear of the water," Bloom recalled. "She'd just walk into the water and thought it was a game when I had to pull her out." Bloom couldn't sign her up for swimming or water safety lessons because there were none available at that time for children under 3. So she started a program called Turn, Kick, Reach that teaches young children what to do — and potentially saves their lives — if they fall into a pool. In just five 20-to-30-minute private lessons, Turn, Kick,

Reach teaches children how to hold their breath, put their face in the water and swim to the steps or wall of a pool. Children are taught that if they fall into a body of water, they should turn back to where they fell in, kick their feet and reach for the edge or steps.

Bloom teaches Turn, Kick, Reach to kids as young as 10

months old. She's also taught the program to senior citizens.

For more information about Baby Otter Swim School or the DVD, which retails for \$17.95, visit www.babyotterswimschool.com or www.tenminutesforlife.com.

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