



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

World's Largest Swimming Lesson™ Event Sets New Guinness World Record with more than 20,000 Participants

Simultaneous global event includes kids from fourteen countries on five continents.

OVERLAND PARK, KS. (August 1, 2011) – Final counts are in and the 2011 **World's Largest Swimming Lesson™** team grew the number of participating swimmers by 500% to set a new *Guinness World Record*. More than 20,000 kids and adults at aquatic facilities from Los Angeles to Lebanon came together for the 2011 global event to be a part of the largest simultaneous swimming lesson ever conducted and send the message *Swimming Lessons Save Lives™*.

The 2011 **World's Largest Swimming Lesson** (WLSL) event officially captured the new *Guinness World Record* on Tuesday, June 14th. Since then, more than 300 facilities representing 14 countries on 5 continents, including 45 states in the US, have submitted log-sheets, witness letters, photos and more as proof of performance for their local record attempts. All materials are now sent on to the Guinness organization for final sanctioning.

Disney's Typhoon Lagoon waterpark near Orlando served as the official headquarters for the international event for the second year and set an individual *Guinness World Record* for the largest swimming lesson ever held at one location with 611 participants.

The states of Florida, California and Texas had the largest participation in the US, with more than 100 different locations hosting lessons across the three states. International support for the WLSL program saw strong growth as well, with the biggest jump and overall number of participants coming from Mexico and Brazil.

Olympic Gold Medalists and official WLSL spokespeople, Rowdy Gaines and Janet Evans, championed the event to help convey that loss of life from drowning can be prevented through awareness and training. As parents, both athletes feel a strong commitment to teaching children how to be safe in and around the water.

"We're very excited to see such terrific growth for year two," said Gaines. "The huge jump in numbers demonstrates the strength of the program and its message."

"It is so important to draw attention to this issue," said, Evans. "**The World's Largest Swimming Lesson** is a perfect way to bring the *Swimming Lessons Save Lives* message to life for kids and parents."

The CPSC's *Pool Safely* campaign partnered with the 2011 WLSL event to encourage more Americans to learn to swim safely.

“Thousands of young people learned valuable swimming skills that will help them enjoy a lifetime of water activities”, said Inez Tenenbaum, Chairman of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. “More importantly, these skills can help prevent child drownings.” Under Tenenbaum’s leadership, the CPSC launched the *Pool Safely* campaign, the federal government’s first-of-its-kind national public education effort to reduce child drowning incidents.

Merck Consumer Care, the makers of COPPERTONE®, also helped sponsor the 2011 WLSL event in recognition of the 20th anniversary of Coppertone Sport and to support the program’s water safety mission including the use of waterproof sunscreen before and during participation in water activities.

“As a mom, I want to make sure my children are safe in the water and protected from the sun when they’re outside,” said Gold Medalist and COPPERTONE® spokesperson, Summer Sanders. “The **World’s Largest Swimming Lesson** helps spread the word about ‘waterproofing’ your kids. Water safety and sun safety are my priorities.”

The WLSL event owes its huge success to the combined effort of many individuals, facilities and organizations that have shown support for the program and its mission.

Initially developed as a culminating event for National Water Safety Month, **The World’s Largest Swimming Lesson** is presented by a coalition of the nations top aquatic organizations including: the American Red Cross, Aquatics International, Association of Aquatic Professionals, Association of Pool and Spa Professionals, International Swimming Hall of Fame, International Swim Instructors Association, Independent Pool and Spa Service Association, Jeff Ellis & Associates, National Aquatic Safety Company, National Recreation and Park Association, Starfish Aquatics Institute, Swim For Life Foundation, United States Swim School Association and the World Waterpark Association.

Mark your calendars for next year – WLSL is set for Thursday, June 14, 2012. Organizers are already ramping up to smash the 2011 record!

About The World’s Largest Swimming Lesson™

The World’s Largest Swimming Lesson™ was created as a platform to help aquatic facilities and the many different regional, national and international water safety and drowning prevention organizations work together to communicate the fundamental importance of teaching children to swim.

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