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Courtesy Photo

## Swim Kids makes a splash in Gainesville

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Here comes the sun, and here comes the water; now, swim.

Learning to swim is part of growing up; parents recognize the importance of water-safety skills for children. This is an incredibly important component of those lazy summer days at the pool.

Swim Kids, a swim instruction company based in Prince William County, has provided cutting-edge swimming and water education lessons since 1997. Programs are for all ages and abilities; Swim Kids will find an energetic instructor that will be a perfect fit for an individual's or group's needs.

Dave and Cindy Tonnesen launched the first Swim Kids program in 1997, as a way to earn extra income they earmarked for their son's college education. The couple's extensive background in swim coaching made Swim Kids seem like a natural extension of family life.

Now in its 13th year, Swim Kids is constructing its "flagship" school in the Gainesville area. Just outside the Virginia Gateway complex in Gainesville, the 6000-square-foot facility will provide local families a distinct alternative in swim instruction. It will open in June.

The school's "innovative and



**Cindy and Dave Tonnesen of Swim Kids are thrilled to bring their unique brand of instruction to Gainesville area families.**

Courtesy photo

customized design" will provide a comfortable environment for children to practice their developing skills, Cindy Tonnesen said.

The school offers a wealth of special features to delight parents and children alike. A built-in "tot-dock" is designed with babies in mind; its six inches of water is the perfect depth for wee ones. The pool area will have teaching areas for varying age groups, with shallow depths, ranging from 2-1/2 to 4 feet, permitting even the shortest of swimmers' toes to touch the bot-

tom.

The pool will remain a balmy 88 degrees year round and is equipped with the latest technology. An ultraviolet disinfection system will ensure the water is pristine at all times. In addition to traditional chlorine, this system works with a chemical controller to enable the pool's chemical levels to be monitored and adjusted 24 hours a day, via the Internet.

Creature comforts will extend to swimmers' families. The Under the Sea-themed viewing area is

equipped with comfortable seating, tables and WiFi capabilities. A play area is stocked with activities to keep siblings entertained, and the 12-foot glass walls provide a view of the pool.

An onsite swim shop will provide families with all the equipment they will need: goggles, suits, fins and more.

Here, swimmers will experience Swim Kids' program that encourages a love of water and an appropriate respect for it. Instructors break down complex strokes in an age-appropriate progression to enable children to learn swim skills at their own pace, with plenty of positive reinforcement.

"Our whole program is predicated on having kids build self-confidence and self-esteem as they learn excellent strokes in the water," Tonnesen said. The program addresses both the physical and emotional components of becoming a confident swimmer, she continued.

Swimming programs begin for babies at 6 months to help children become comfortable in the water. Well-trained swimming instructors help parents and children become acclimated to their new surroundings, providing safety instructions and the foundation for important swim skills.

Swim Tots instructs 3- to 5-year olds; Swim Kids is for ages 6 to teenagers. Classes are limited to three to five children per instructor. Lessons for adults are also

available; they are generally private instruction.

As students achieve basic skills and water confidence, they then learn proper techniques for four swim strokes: freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and butterfly. Advanced skills include the more difficult tasks of starting, turning and learning-to-swim medleys.

Swim Kids also offers classes for children with autism or other special needs. Classes are taught by swim teachers with years of specialized experience who can use water-therapy techniques to instruct students in innovative ways.

Turning novices into excellent swimmers is Swim Kids' goal. The school's unique blend of small class settings, immediate advancement upon goal completion and positive reinforcement lead to a high level of achievement in the pool, the Tonnesens agreed.

Weekly swim lessons and swim team opportunities are available year round at Swim Kids. Summer swim camp classes, which meet Monday to Thursday for two-week periods, are now forming.

Swim Kids has six locations in Prince William County and one in Fredericksburg. Information on camps and classes is online at [www.swimkids.us](http://www.swimkids.us) or available by phone at 703-396-SWIM.

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