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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **American Red Cross Expands Campaign to Reduce Childhood Drowning**

**Washington D.C. – May 24, 2023.** The American Red Cross announced today a plan to double the size of its groundbreaking Aquatics Centennial Campaign by the end of 2023. The campaign aims to reduce drowning rates in locations where drowning rates are above the national average. According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's data, when looking at Centennial programs as a whole, counties with Red Cross Centennial programs saw an overall 10% decrease in drowning rates versus a 6% decrease nationally. As part of this expansion, the Red Cross plans to help teach 22,500 more children annually to become water competent. Additionally, each year, the campaign is expected to support the training of 900 lifeguards and 600 Red Cross Water Safety Instructor® professionals.

The Aquatics Centennial Campaign was launched in 2014 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Commodore Wilbert Longfellow's 33-year effort that reduced the national drowning rate by 50%. These additions will augment the already successful campaign, which has delivered more than 120,000 sets of swim lessons and 5,000 certified lifeguards and Water Safety Instructors. The expansion of this Red Cross [drowning prevention work](#) comes at a time when national data shows that drowning continues to be a problem in underserved communities.

"We are thrilled to see such positive outcomes as a result of our water safety mission," said Gail McGovern, president and CEO of the Red Cross. "That's why, today, we are working to double the number of communities participating in the Aquatics Centennial Campaign to 100. Working with trusted partners such as Diversity in Aquatics and The ZAC Foundation, as well as our Red Cross training providers, we hope to further reduce the tragedy of childhood drowning."

"When looking at a range of data points, we see a marked improvement in drowning rates versus the national average in those communities being served by the Aquatics Centennial Campaign," said William Ramos, Ph.D., a member of the Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council and associate professor for the University of Indiana's School of Public Health. "It's a source of pride to see our work contributing to achieving these results and to be able to extend the campaign based on our past success."

In a [video](#) explaining the importance of the program in the Miami-Dade, Florida community, Bridget McKinney, a member of the Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council and president/founder of Professionals – Sharing With a Purpose, shared, "Because of the Aquatics Centennial Campaign, we now have the infrastructure in place to develop lifeguards and Water Safety Instructors – many of whom started out taking our swim lessons. This critical support has helped us reach so many more in our community than we would have otherwise."

Each year, the Red Cross trains more than 2.5 million people in swimming and water safety. The campaign builds upon this ecosystem of water safety – a focus on water safety education, CPR training for parents and community-based outreach – thereby making the water safer for everyone.

For more information, visit [redcross.org/CentennialSwim](https://www.redcross.org/CentennialSwim).

**About the American Red Cross:**

*The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and provides emotional support to victims of disasters; supplies about 40 percent of the nation's blood; teaches skills that save lives; provides international humanitarian aid; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a not-for-profit organization that depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its mission. For more information, please visit [redcross.org](http://redcross.org) or [cruzrojaamericana.org](http://cruzrojaamericana.org), or visit us on Twitter at [@RedCross](https://twitter.com/RedCross).*

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