

May 20, 2008

Dear Members,

Welcome back to what we all hope will be a fun and safe summer. This letter is to update you on recent swimming research which was new information to the board and might be of interest to you, as well as remind everyone of the primary safety concerns. You, the Board of Directors and pool management all share a common goal of providing a safe environment.

Mill Creek has a very good safety record and has always worked to keep it that way. However, the weakest link in our safety program has been member education. This letter is the first step to improving that element of the overall safety program. It is not meant to scare you. Rather, proper education and knowledge of the risks helps us to reduce them. Every activity we engage in has risks. Our challenge as adults is to manage them effectively.

The top 4 safety concerns at any pool are: 1) unattended children, 2) head first entry, 3) shallow water blackout, 4) recreational water illnesses.

You will see new signs around the pool as reminders and in some cases the guards will prohibit some actions which we may have allowed in the past. We still want it to be fun, we just want everyone to remain safe.

In summary here is what you can do to make your swimming safer:

- 1) Closely watch your children. Especially children under 8 years old can get into trouble and drown in a matter of seconds, faster than anyone more than a few feet away can respond.
- 2) Do not enter the pool head first except in the deep end. Period.
- 3) No extended underwater swimming or breath holding.
- 4) Wash before entering the pool and use the bathroom for waste removal and not the pool. Change diapers often.

## **Watching your children**

It is every parent's responsibility to watch out for their children, no matter their swimming ability. It only takes seconds for a non-swimmer child to drown, and not much longer for a tired swimmer. This is faster than the most vigilant lifeguard can react.

Shallow end or deep end - it's all the same if the water is over the child's head when standing, it is deep. Parents should remain near their children to prevent accidents. Swimmies are floatation aids, not a life jacket. A proper life jacket forces the head out of the water and is nearly impossible to slip off. Swimmies allow the face to be in the water and do slip off. If your child requires swimmies to stay alive in the water please don't leave them alone.

The kiddie pool does not have a lifeguard on duty and is not monitored by the lifeguards. It is required that a parent stay in the fenced kiddie pool whenever they have a child within the fence.

## **Head first entry - diving**

The statistics of diving accidents show that there are virtually no accidents when diving off of a diving board into sufficiently deep water. Nearly all the accidents happen because someone dives (enters head first) into shallow water, either unknowingly or because they think they can control the entry. Nearly 95 percent of headfirst entry induced spinal cord injuries occur in less than 5 feet of water. About 5 percent occur in water depths between 5 and 8 feet. In 28 percent of the cases the injury occurred during the person's first "dive" into that pool. (For example, visitors and people unfamiliar with the pool.)

You will see new warning signs around the pool. Please talk to you children and remind them that diving is dangerous and should only be done in the deep end. Head first entry is best limited to the diving board.

## **Shallow water blackout**

Though this issue is not new, it's identification and publication is. Prolonged underwater breath holding is a silent killer. This occurs when people try to swim across the pool under water with one breath, or see how long they can sit on the bottom of the pool, or train with hyperventilation. When carried to far it can lead to unconsciousness and potential drowning or in some cases cardiac arrhythmia. Because it happens underwater, without any signs of struggle, and suddenly due to lack of oxygen the lifeguards typically don't recognize the condition quickly. With already depleted oxygen in the blood stream there is very little time available to react and save the person.

While the physiology of the underwater event is complicated, the results are quite simple – death by drowning or cardiac arrhythmia. Additional information can be found in an article at <http://www.aquaticsafetygroup.com/DyingforAir.html> with a link on our web site, and posted at the pool.

The lifeguards will be instructed to watch for this and prohibit it at Mill Creek.

## **Recreational Water Illnesses**

Fancy words for germs that make us sick. While drowning is on the decline nationally water illnesses are on the rise. Illnesses occur because germs enter our pool, we are exposed and in some cases we get sick. Mill Creek uses a system of bromine disinfection which is continuously, automatically monitored and controlled. That system is manually tested 3 times per day. This system can become overwhelmed if too much contamination enters the pool at once. Any organic matter uses up the disinfectant, whether it is harmful or harmless.

What can you do to help? Shower before entering the pool. Educate your children about proper hygiene and see that they are taking bathroom breaks and washing their hands afterward. Do not urinate, spit or blow your nose in the pool. No polluting the pool. Avoid drinking the pool water – to avoid ingesting the germs. Change diapers often and do so away from the pool. Don't swim if you have or have recently had diarrhea.