

**From:** Callie Harris [<mailto:Callie.Harris@KeysSchools.com>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 04, 2017 10:08 AM  
**To:** Stephanie Johnson <[sjohnson@cityofkeywest-fl.gov](mailto:sjohnson@cityofkeywest-fl.gov)>  
**Subject:** isr swim lessons at mlk pool  
**Importance:** High

Good morning Stephanie,

Hope all is well with you and your family. Can you please forward this onto the commissioners regarding the ISR swim lessons at MLK pool please and thank you? Have a good day!

Dear City Commissioners,

I am also writing to you today as a mother, as a wife of a City of Key West paramedic, as a teacher, and as an active community member who cares about the well-being of our all of our Conch babies. I am pleading with you to please allow Safe Waters Swim School to use MLK pool for their drowning prevention and safety lessons. I use the word drowning prevention because this course is not about teaching my daughters to learn swim techniques like freestyle. Lori Bosco, at FKCC pool, does a great job at teaching our Conch babies to swim and learn their strokes. I know because my daughters currently attend her swim lessons twice a week. There is no other program like ISR offered in the Keys. There is not one ISR instructor living in the keys. I beg you... to take 2 minutes to check out their website [Safe Waters Swim School](#) to learn more about these safety lessons. These lessons have a totally different goal than any lesson offered at FKCC.

This is about that split second you take your eyes off your toddler at the pool or near any body of water for that matter...that one millisecond that could turn your world upside down. This is about that one time out of a thousand, your neighbor leaves their backyard gate open to their pool or canal....and all your toddler wants to do is go say hi to Nemo without your knowledge. ISR is not about teaching your child to swim, its about saving lives. Giving your child a fighting chance to not immediately sink to the bottom, but instead to flip over and float if all else fails....turning that millisecond of every parent's worse nightmare into a story of survival.

My two year old twin daughters completed the ISR course last summer through Safe Waters at MLK pool. I cannot thank Stephanie Johnson enough for all of her hard work with the city to make these lessons happen. I can honestly say I have never been more proud of my daughters than watching them through seven weeks of lessons. Did they cry during some of the lessons, of course they did, they are two. They also cry if I give them the wrong color spoon in the morning for all the naysayers out there that say we are torturing/drowning them. You know what crying says to me?? It says that they are breathing.... they are on the surface of the water where I can hear them.. and not at the bottom of the pool where I cannot. The first time my daughter floated unassisted in the pool last summer.... every single person at that pool jumped up and cheered (the lifeguards, the tourists, many of my current and former HOB students). One of the most amazing feats of ISR is having the students float/swim back to the wall fully clothed. Again, going back to the idea of drowning prevention not swim lessons. Almost all cases of accidental drownings of children are not when they are dressed in their cute Elsa swim suit, but when they fully dressed and weren't suppose to be anywhere near the water.

Yes, I know these lessons are more expensive than others offered out there. However, how can you put a price on teaching your child survival skills? How much would you pay to have your child floating at the surface of the water than sinking to the bottom? They are priceless in comparison to the outcome of what could happen. Yes, I have and will happily pay for my two year olds to be flipped upside down, face first, fully clothed into a pool.....because this is the reality... that is the real life scenario of what really happens when accidental drownings occur.

I want to share my own person story of why Key West needs these lessons. Our community was shaken to its core in January 2017 when three children drown in the West Isle Communal pool. As quoted from FL Keys News Website:

*A Key West preacher and his two neighbors Sunday saved three children from drowning in an apartment complex's swimming pool, according to police.*

*The Rev. Daniel John Anspach along with Diana Reshetko Rosa and her father Anatoly Reshetko jumped into action after they saw three kids — a 3-year-old boy, 4-year-old girl and 12-year-old girl — jump into deep end of the pool at West Isle Club, 3333 Duck Ave., but fail to surface after a few seconds.*

My husband, a Key West firefighter/paramedic, was the first first-responder on scene that day. My husband does not get rattled easily (burning buildings, car crashes, pedestrian accidents, etc...all part of the call of duty). However, this one hit entirely too close to home. I remember it clear as day. I was just putting our twins to bed and reading them a bedtime story. I paused mid-page as I heard the helicopter fly over our house. I know there is only one reason a helicopter is flying over Big Coppitt at night... its headed straight to LKMC. I gave them each an extra squeeze as I tucked them in and thought to myself I need to call him since he is was medic on call. He didn't pick up, but I got a return call from him not ten minutes later. He called still standing in the ER as they had life flighted out the three children moments earlier. The first words out of his mouth were, 'When is ISR coming back down here? I want them back in those lessons asap'. Please reread the last sentence of that article..... **THEY FAILED TO SURFACE.**

Lastly, I ask you to spend 55 seconds and watch my two year old daughter at a lesson last summer. <https://youtu.be/JAQPjhfg1B0>

This is not some advertisement or promo... this is Avery Harris, two year old daughter of an HOB teacher and Key West Firefighter. Imagine the outcome if that preacher hadn't been out on his balcony that night? Imagine the outcome if those three children were given the opportunity to participate in ISR lessons?

Thank you for your time and support. Please consider the magnitude and impact these safety lessons could have on our Key West community.

Sincerely,

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