



CASE STUDY

SWIM INITIATIVE PILOT PROGRAM

Organized by The Rockaway Hotel
With Rising Tide Effect



Swimming is a basic but vital skill that can be lifesaving and life-enriching. We seek to empower youths from under-served communities through swimming.

INTRODUCTION

The Rockaway Hotel is an urban beach getaway located in Rockaway Beach, Queens NY and is founded upon the core values of experience, community and environment. We activate these values through arts and cultural programming, strategic partnerships and a commitment to public service.

The Rising Tide Effect (RTE) is a 501c3 that seeks to to bring positive change to underserved communities through the aquatic experience. Swimming is a critical life skill that is essential to water safety and has the power to save lives. It is also a mechanism through which people can grow and thrive. RTE was created to uplift people experiencing socioeconomic hardship by providing frameworks for not only education and safety, but also personal development, through swimming.

The Rockaway Hotel and Rising Tide Effect envisioned a swim initiative to bring water safety training to the Rockaway Beach community, to support our shared goals of uplifting and empowering individuals with demonstrated need.



NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Research indicates that formal swimming lessons can reduce the risk of drowning by as much as



- Drowning is among the top causes of unintentional death for individuals under 30, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- One in five people who die from drowning are children under 14.
- The Rockaway peninsula in Queens, New York has surprisingly strong currents with high frequency of rip current, despite the appearance of relatively calm water. These rip currents are strong enough to carry a swimmer wading in knee-deep water is enough out to sea.
- Dozens of people drown annually at Rockaway Beach due to key factors like swimming alone without supervision, often at night when lifeguards are not on duty.
- The average age of the drowning victims in Rockaway is 16 years old.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE



Program Schedule

60min lessons 2x per week
8 lessons total over 1 month
Students split into 2 groups,
taking class back-to-back on
scheduled days



Primary Focus

Basic Water Safety
Swimming Fundamentals
Ocean Preparedness



Target Demographic

14 years - 18 years
Newly independent young
adults with little to no swim
experience; more prone to
risky behavior and swimming
when/where lifeguards are not
on duty



Leadership

1 instructor : 3 students
Allows for dedicated
one-on-one time for each
student within each lesson

CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Water Safety

Basic Pool Safety Rules
When/When Not To Swim
Supervision & The Buddy System
What To Do In Emergencies

Swimming Fundamentals

Breath control
Body position
Propulsion
Buoyancy
Treading water
Basic swim strokes

Ocean Preparedness

Bodies of Water by Type
Seasonal Conditions
Identifying and Mitigating Risk

DESIRED OUTCOMES

1

Ensure each student can swim to save their life

2

Introduce students to basic principles of water/ocean safety

3

Build respect for aquatic environments and conditions

4

Create expansive opportunities for students to use swimming as a vehicle for personal development

WATER SAFETY TRAINING

The pilot program was bolstered by an ocean safety course provided by Swim Strong Foundation and delivered by swim instructors.

- Presentation format with discussion prompts
- Student quiz to measure content retention
- Topics included safety considerations for pool environments, open water, seasonal risk factors, as well as understanding weather indications.

A comprehensive virtual program is available from Swim Strong with expanded presentations and videos by topic at a cost of \$15 per student. Our goal is to incorporate this expanded learning resource into the curriculum of the scaled program.

SAMPLE SLIDE

A Word About Rip Currents

- Rip currents are natural hazards that pull people away from the beach.
- They are caused when sandbars trap incoming waves. When the sand bar breaks the water rushes out to sea causing a rip current.
- These currents intensify during tropical storm and hurricane season.
- Try to avoid swimming where rip currents are present.



THAT'S WHAT A RIP
CURRENT LOOKS LIKE!

KNOW
YOUR
WATER

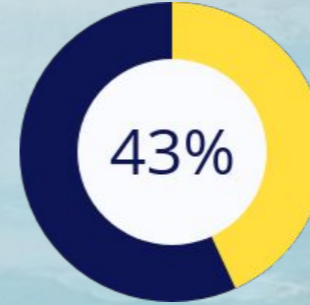
swim
strong

**swim
strong**® Skills for Life

The background is a solid teal color with a dense pattern of out-of-focus light spots, creating a bokeh effect. These spots vary in size and brightness, with some appearing as sharp white circles and others as softer, larger teal or light blue blurs. The overall texture is dreamy and ethereal.

OBSERVATIONS & SURVEY FINDINGS

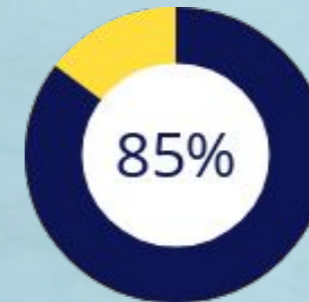
BACKGROUND EXPERIENCE



did not know
swimming is considered
a life skill



have wanted to learn
to swim or improve
their ability before
the program



live near the water

TRUST

Students entering the program were shy and felt somewhat vulnerable. Establishing trust relationships between students and instructors was critical to sparking their interest in participation and willingness to face challenges that support daily progress throughout the program.

This was achieved through:

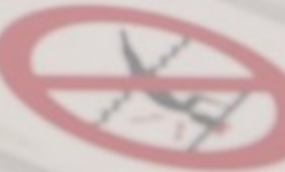
- **Building safe space for vulnerability**– Classes always began with relaxed conversation where students and instructors could talk through prior experiences, find common ground and get to know each other.
- **Providing equipment** –Providing trunks for each swimmer eliminated the disparity between students who had swimwear and those who didn't. Receiving new trunks, goggles, and caps excited students and they took pride in their equipment.
- **Instructor as role model** – Instructors shared their personal backgrounds and stories with students to demonstrate how swimming could be a path to various experiences and careers. Many students expressed interest.

"I would describe Jon as a good coach because he taught me to keep my balance in the water. Also, he gives good advice. I would like to swim with him again."

"Miss Kate is a great teacher. She uplifts you and motivates you."

EQUIPMENT

- + Many students arrived to class without swimwear.
- + Proper swimming gear improves performance and helps foster self confidence.
- + Providing swimwear brings greater confidence to students who do not have swimsuits and reduces economic barriers to entry.
- + Performance improved with the use of provided equipment including noodles, barbells, goggles, suit and flippers.



CONFIDENCE

Self Confidence began to thrive after the second lesson. Challenges were continually met, and students demonstrated focus on the program goals.

The students were noticeably stronger after week 2, having transitioned from learning buoyancy/breath control/body positioning, to swimming entire laps without a breath. This allowed instructors to adjust focus to form for various swim strokes which increased student propulsion.

As students progressed, they demonstrated

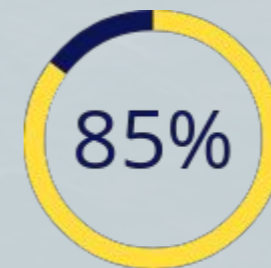
- Interest in competitive swimming, opting for races at class end
- Desire to join a swim team or take supplementary classes to further develop skills after the program concluded



of students asked to swim back-to-back sessions to gain extra time with instructors practicing new skills



of students wanted to know where they could join a competitive program after this experience



of students wanted to continue swimming after the program



"I'm proud. It wasn't easy!"

"I got to know another side of myself and I am interested in knowing more."

"I will tell them I'm not the same person I was before when it comes to swimming."

MEALS

The Rockaway Hotel provided free meals to students after each lesson. The experience of good food got the young men vested in the program while the ritual of sharing a meal together prompted them to reflect and discuss how they felt throughout the program process.

Exposure to the hotel environment and how they were treated was equally as important as the lessons, promoting a greater sense of pride and self worth in students as the program progressed.

The meal option also opened up conversation among students about general health considerations . Students expressed interest in healthier food options when available in addition to wanting more time in the pool.


100%

Of students opted to join for elective group meals after each class

40%

Of students started to opt for salad instead of fries at lunch mid- way through the pilot.

The swim initiative program creates expansive opportunities, prompting students to use swimming as a vehicle for personal development. Students leave the program with resources that will allow them to:

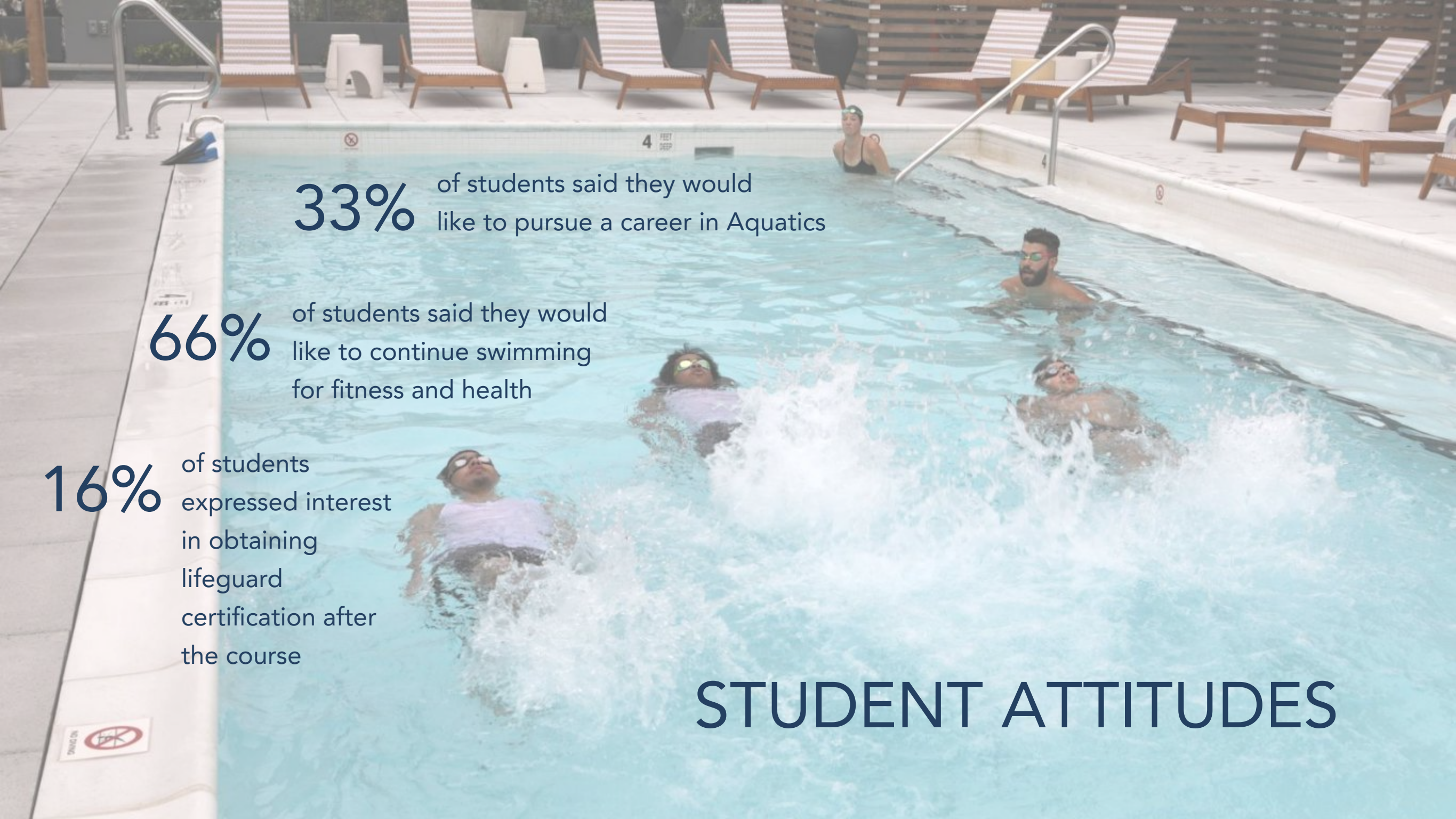
A photograph of a swimmer in a pool, wearing a black swim cap and goggles, performing a freestyle stroke. The swimmer is in the foreground, with their head above water and arms extended. In the background, another swimmer is visible, also in motion. The water is a light blue color, and there are lane lines visible in the pool.

+ Obtain lifeguarding and CPR certification

+ Meet swim requirements for military service

+ Meet swim requirements for select universities

+ Join a local swim team to further develop skills and interact with peers



33% of students said they would like to pursue a career in Aquatics

66% of students said they would like to continue swimming for fitness and health

16% of students expressed interest in obtaining lifeguard certification after the course

STUDENT ATTITUDES

LOOKING AHEAD

Rising Tide Effect and The Rockaway Hotel seek to expand the Swim Initiative to reach a wider group of at-risk youth in Rockaway Beach in Spring/Summer 2021.

PROGRAM GOALS INCLUDE:

- Partner with local schools to survey students and identify those who demonstrate the greatest need and interest in the program.
- Open opportunity up to a diverse range of students from all of the Rockaway neighborhoods, not just those closest to the hotel.
- Provide transportation to The Rockaway Hotel so proximity is not a barrier to entry.
- Increase number of class cohorts to expand maximum number of students served.
- Increase course duration and add full water safety education module to strengthen impact of course for students.
- Formalize the mentorship component of the program where students hear from role models in the field of aquatics during post-class meal time
- Support students in efforts to continue swim training after the program.

GOALS TO EXPAND PROGRAM IMPACT



Program Schedule

12 lessons in 4 weeks per session
Cohorts to meet Mon-Tues-Wed weekly
Serving 4 cohorts per session,
5 sessions per season
Serving 60 students per season



Curriculum Focus

Water Safety
Fundamental Swimming
Ocean Safety
Mentorship



Equity & Inclusion

Expand opportunity to serve
13 - 14 year-old students from
across the Rockaway peninsula
based on demonstrated need



Expanding Reach

Create pipeline for
students to pursue
swimming as a sport or
vocation through swim
clubs and certification
programs

NEXT STEPS

Funding: RTE has been awarded a grant of \$25,000 to execute an expanded format of the swim initiative between May and October 2021. Costs will be employed to cover the cost of administration, staffing, speakers and student transportation.

Confirmed Partnerships:

Rising Tide Effect to administer program, coordinate student and instructor schedules, manage reporting.

The Rockaway Hotel to host beginner classes Mon – Wed between 8am and 12pm and provide post-class snacks

Finis to provide equipment for use during in-pool training.

Broad Channel Athletic Club – Local representatives from BCAC will serve as mentor speakers and develop a pipeline for students to join their community swim team.

TBC Partnerships:

Swimwear – In conversation with Patagonia to provide swimsuits to participants

Transportation – In conversation with local partner to provide transportation for students to/from class at the hotel either at non-profit rate or as a sponsor.

THANK YOU



