

Friends of Rockbridge Swimming, Inc.
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Friends of Rockbridge Swimming, Inc. Local Community Impact, December 2021

2021 like 2020 before was a challenging year for all. We are proud to provide a safe environment for people to exercise, do aqua therapy, and have an outlet for the stress during the pandemic. We are happy to report that our social distancing measures, mask requirements and our consistent cleaning protocols allowed us to operate the pool without interruption for the last 19 months. FOR Swimming continued to offer expanded lap swim and additional Aquacise classes to accommodate our swimmers in a safe and socially distanced manner. The schedule was also amended to separate the general membership from the youth teams by allowing most swimming and classes to be held during the day with practices held in the evening. We continued to use our online scheduling system to accommodate as many people as possible while spreading our pool patrons uniformly throughout the day ensuring social distancing.

During 2021, FOR Swimming provided on a weekly basis:

- 54 hours per week of open public lap swimming and family swimming.
- 10 hours of weekly Aquacise classes targeted for the older adults, many for whom regular land exercise is out of the question.
- 5 hours are available weekly to individuals at risk for severe complications from COVID-19. These hours are further limited to allow only 3 swimmers in the building for safety.

In 2021, we had 251 individual members. Well over half our membership is held by individuals over 65. In addition to our regular members, we had, on average, 200 non-member daily users per month. We feel that our facility has been a key resource to these members for safe physical activity during this difficult year. The Rockbridge Aquatics Center employed 21 people in the indoor pool – 20 from the three localities and one from out-of-state.

The Rockbridge Aquatics Center supported four teams this year– Rockbridge County High School Wildcats (*23 swimmers*), STORM (club swimming team affiliated with USA Swimming, primarily for elementary and middle school age children) (*119 swimmers over the course of the year*), Buena Vista's Parry McCluer swim team (*4 swimmers*) and SVU college team. We are very happy that SVU's swim team has been able to continue to use the facility for practices in 2021 for their third consecutive year.

Each year FOR Swimming has ensured that every child enrolled in 3rd grade at Waddell Elementary School receives free swim lessons through our Make-a-Splash program. In 2021, 60 third graders from Waddell participated in the program. Each participant received three swim lessons, free of charge, during the regular school day. FOR Swimming was able to utilize the outdoor pool as the venue for these 2021 Waddell lessons as an added layer of safety during the ongoing situation with COVID-19. We are in discussions with the school to extend the program to the fourth-grade students who missed their lesson opportunity in 2020 this coming spring.

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In 2021 we were able to offer safe swim lessons in semi-private pods. These pods allowed two swimmers from a family or social group to be taught together in 30-minute classes by our talented FOR swimming instructors. We taught 40 lessons between May and July using these protocols. We are looking forward to expanding our swim lesson offerings and returning to our usual schedule for these valuable classes in 2022.

Typically, Maury River Middle School 6th graders received water safety at The Rockbridge Aquatics Center each fall. Due to changes as a result of COVID-19, we have been unable to complete these much-needed water safety lessons in 2021. However, FOR Swimming plans to offer this program to those 6th graders who missed the opportunity over the summer months and into the fall of this coming year. This program is free of charge for the students. These lifesaving skills guard against accidental drowning throughout their lives. This program is offered each year before they embark on their annual Kayaking field trip.

Our Red Cross certified instructor, FOR Swimming's Aquatics Director Leslie Ayers, trained 58 lifeguards this year. Given the demand with area pools reopening for 2021, Leslie taught extra classes to help train lifeguards for Buena Vista, Lexington City, and Rockbridge County pools. In addition, Leslie taught a class to staff a local summer camp and for VMI. Leslie leads an efficient blended learning course that maximizes opportunity for in person skills training and uses online learning resources to accomplish the mandatory 27 hours of training required for all Red Cross certified lifeguards. The course is rigorous and focused on important water skills and CPR/AED skills over two days to complete the certification. The course is offered at least twice per year.

We were able to again manage the outdoor Municipal pool in Summer 2021. We are very grateful to the City for entrusting us with that task. This summer we were able to return to normal operation without the requirement of reservations as were necessary in 2020. However, we continued to ensure the safety of all pool users by maintaining enhanced cleaning measures and despite the unusual circumstances, we had a successful, wonderful, and safe summer swim season. Our staff did a fantastic job keeping the facility clean and visitor friendly. We maintained the extended hours of operation that we implemented in 2020 to give an opportunity for people who work to do lap swim in the mornings before the start of the workday. We hired and trained 8 part-time high school lifeguards (5 city residents, 3 county residents) and ran the pool with an additional 10 staff members from the indoor pool.

FOR Swimming Board members in 2021: *Joellyn Schwarzmann (President), Mary Looney (Vice President), Patricia Delaney (Treasurer), Kjrsten Keane (Secretary), Kar Bisailon, Todd Jones, Joe Borzelleca, Butch Snow, Janet Gibson, Valentina Dimitrova-Grajzl*