



MEDIA ALERT

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NOVA and Bon Secours Bring *movin' mania* to the West End of Richmond Inaugural program teaching almost 40 kids aged 6-14 to swim with free of charge lessons at the NOVA Aquatics Center

Richmond, VA (July 31, 2014) – NOVA of Virginia Aquatics (NOVA) has partnered with Bon Secours Virginia Health System (Bon Secours) and its *movin' mania* program to offer free swim lessons to area children this summer. The lessons, designed for kids who have little to no swimming experience and limited access to lessons, are focused on teaching water safety, basic swimming skills, and enjoyment of swimming as a lifetime fitness option.

Swimming is a critical life skill for all children. According to USA Swimming, 70% of African-American children, 60% of Latino children, and 40% of Caucasian children have low or no swimming ability. Each day, two children younger than 14 years of age drown in the United States, and, for every one that drowns, another five children receive emergency medical care for near-drowning accidents (www.cdc.gov). USA Swimming has found that, by learning to swim in a structured learn-to-swim program, a child is 88% less likely to drown.

Participants will complete a session of seven lessons at the NOVA Aquatics Center on Gayton Road. The session began July 12 and runs through August 3. Instructors are using NOVA's proprietary swim lesson program to teach groups of four to six students the key skills needed not only to be safe, but also to enjoy swimming as a fun and fitness-oriented activity. Dr. Kelly Stuart, Healthcare Ethicist at Bon Secours, said, "[NOVA] is affording these children the opportunity to achieve physical fitness and become competent, safe swimmers. The program is a wonderful story of community partnership in the best sense."

The majority of this year's participants are students at Ruby F. Carver Elementary School in Henrico County. By partnering with this school, NOVA is serving students in the area immediately surrounding the NOVA Aquatics Center. "Bon Secours *movin' mania* is delighted to join NOVA to teach children how to swim this summer," said Tunstall B. Willis, program coordinator, *movin' mania*, Bon Secours Health System. "As a mission-driven health system, we want to educate and empower as many children as we can, and since these kids have little or no swimming experience, this will really impact their lives."

Ann McGee, program coordinator for NOVA, added, “All children need to know how to swim and deserve to learn in a safe and structured environment. NOVA is excited to share our resources with the community and implement a program where more children have an opportunity to take lessons.”

In addition to the Carver students, the program has specifically targeted the Hispanic community in the area. Patricia Gavilan, RN, Bon Secours’ Manager of Diversity and Cross-Cultural Services stated, “It is difficult for children in the Latino community to access quality swim programs. NOVA is providing these children with the opportunity to develop these very important skills.”

The program will wrap up on August 3, with an appearance from the Bon Secours movin’ maniacs. For NOVA, the program has accomplished the goal of making children safer in the water. McGee stated, “Bon Secours has launched a wonderful community partnership model through *movin’ mania*, and NOVA is very happy to be part of this meaningful initiative. We are looking forward to seeing how the program can continue and expand in the future.”

About NOVA of Virginia Aquatics:

NOVA is a non-profit, full-service swim club that meets the needs of every level of swimmer, from lessons to Masters. It is currently ranked sixth in the nation for overall club performance for swimming competition and organization by USA Swimming and has received the distinctive Gold Medal Club Award.

Led by head coach Geoff Brown, USA Swimming’s 2012 Developmental Coach of the Year, NOVA’s coaching staff has led its team to three NCSA Junior National Swimming Championships and won the Virginia Swimming Short Course Age Group Championship for fifteen consecutive years and the Virginia Swimming Senior Long Course Championship for nine consecutive years. As a comprehensive aquatics center, NOVA has the region’s leading youth swim lessons program, teaching over 5,100 lessons each year, as well as the top Master’s swimming program in Virginia.

About *movin’ mania*:

Bon Secours Virginia Health System launched *movin’ mania* in 2012 to bring together health care providers, educators, families, business and government leaders to help Virginia children lead healthier lives. With the initiative, Bon Secours aims to provide education, awareness and a foundation for healthy habits to alleviate chronic disease in the next generation of Virginians. *movin’ mania* includes online and offline components designed to educate and incentivize children and families to get active and choose more nutritious foods. The *movin’ mania* interactive web portal offers games, healthy recipes and a calendar of fitness activities with special sections for kids and parents. The movin’ maniacs are child-friendly costumed mascots named Broc, Vore, Hydro, Leche and Vie who attend events and inspire children to lead healthy, active lives. For more information, visit <http://www.movinmania.com/>.

About Bon Secours Virginia Health System:

Bon Secours Virginia provides good help to thousands of Virginians through a network of hospitals, primary and specialty care practices, ambulatory care sites and continuing care facilities across the Commonwealth. The not-for-profit health system employs about 12,000 people, including nearly 300 physicians as part of the Bon Secours Medical Group.

The fourth largest and only faith-based health system in Virginia, Bon Secours Virginia offers a full range of services including cardiac, women's, children's, orthopaedics, oncology, neurosciences and surgery at seven award-winning hospitals.

- Bon Secours Richmond is St. Mary's Hospital, Memorial Regional Medical Center, Richmond Community Hospital and St. Francis Medical Center.
- Bon Secours Hampton Roads is Maryview Medical Center, DePaul Medical Center and Mary Immaculate Hospital.

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