

Edinburgh kids enjoy lifesaving lessons in Portobello

Olympic star teaches crucial water safety classes at local pool.

Young swimmers in Portobello received a day of vital water safety lessons alongside an Olympic medallist to mark Drowning Prevention Week.

Former Olympian Stephen Milne made a star appearance during a Learn to Swim event held at Portobello Swim Centre, with safety lessons offered to 77 children as part of the awareness week.

Nine swim classes were delivered across the day by local swim teachers and the Olympic swimmer, teaching crucial water safety skills, from floating techniques to the Water Safety Code. The event helped build on Learn to Swim's foundations of creating 'Generation Swim' – a generation of safe, competent and confident swimmers.

Portobello Swim Centre, part of Edinburgh Leisure, is one of more than 160 pools in Scotland to offer Learn to Swim lessons as part of a National Framework made possible through a partnership between Scottish Swimming and Scottish Water.

Stephen Milne said: "No one should ever have to feel unsafe or uncomfortable in water, that's why days like these are so important to reinforce the importance of water safety. One reason why Learn to Swim events like this are so important is to energise young swimmers to continue to learn and improve what is a vital life skill.

“It’s always a thrill getting back in the pool but particularly when it can leave a real impact on future generations.”

Stephen won a silver medal at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil and has 5 Commonwealth Games medals having competed in three separate Commonwealth Games since 2014. He is also a world and European champion.

Following the lessons, Stephen hosted a captivating Q&A session to engage with all attendees. To commemorate the day, he presented aspiring swimmers with autographed swim caps and t-shirts, leaving a lasting impression with budding swim stars.

Kate Cramb, Operations Manager at Edinburgh Leisure said: “To host such a meaningful event is a real honour. Water safety is such a huge issue especially during the summer months when families start to spend more time near water – so these vital lessons genuinely do save lives.

“It was also great to welcome an Olympic star in Stephen, who was brilliant in reinforcing the importance of learning to swim to kids, all the while keeping it really fun and uplifting.”

The event marked the end of Drowning Prevention Week, in which more than 75,000 children were offered vital water safety lessons through the Learn to Swim National Framework across the span of the week.

Euan Lowe, CEO of Scottish Swimming, said: “Swimming lessons are the absolute foundations to ensuring water safety. To have Stephen’s presence and active involvement in them made for an unforgettable experience for the children which will hopefully inspire them to continue their safe swimming journey.

“Drowning is far too common in Scotland, and it is something that we are committed to addressing as a partnership. The

event in Portobello allowed us to do that in an engaging way with children.”

Brian Lironi, Director of Corporate Affairs with Scottish Water, added: “We are thrilled with the tremendous success of the water safety event, which undoubtedly left a lasting impact on all participants.

“It is so important to see the next generation of confident swimmers engaging in water safety. Drowning prevention is a topic that needs serious attention all year round but the awareness week gave us another opportunity to reinforce lifesaving skills.”

Drowning Prevention Week, organised by the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS), stands as one of the largest water safety campaigns in the UK and Ireland, specifically targeting the summer season. Its primary goal is to equip individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to make informed decisions regarding water safety, particularly during the summer months.

Learn to Swim is a National Framework committed to creating supportive and quality environments in which children can learn to swim regardless of their age, ability, or skill level. It aims to develop competent swimmers, as well as encouraging youngsters to adopt a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle with sport and fun at its heart.

For more information on the Learn to Swim programme, visit <https://learntoswim.scot/>

