



Local Black triathlete Morgan Spriggs after volunteering his time to teach swim lessons at the Sherwood Regional Family YMCA. In response to the conversation generated by the Black Lives Matter movement and in motivation to address inequalities in water safety education in the BIPOC community, Spriggs has partnered with the Y to teach swim lessons specifically geared to the Black community and other people of color.

# Black Swimming Initiative

## Local triathlete helps break down the barriers

The YMCA is demonstrating community-building leadership as it joins the volunteer water safety group WaterStrong and a few dedicated triathletes to deliver the Black Swimming Initiative, an effort to break down barriers to swimming and water sports that black and brown people often encounter.

Locally, the effort got its start on Sunday, Father's Day, when introductory Black swimming camps were held at the Clark County YMCA in Vancouver for kids of all ages and their parents and caregivers.

According to Sam Cox, awareness director for YMCA of the Columbia-Willamette, plans for future Black Swimming Initiative events are in the works.

"Our hope is that this is just the kickoff event of something bigger," he told the Portland Observer.

Local Black triathlete Morgan Spriggs has partnered with the Y to help teach the courses. Spriggs was

motivated by the national conversation generated by the Black Lives Matter movement and the desire to address inequalities in water safety education in the BIPOC community.

"Our Black Swimming initiative seeks to expand meaningful participation in water sports by providing a strong sense of belonging for black athletes of all backgrounds, abilities, and lifestyles by supporting safe and accessible water safety and swimming instruction," Spriggs said. "Growing up in the Northwest, I was always near a body of water yet my family was fearful of entering it."

With the help of friends, Spriggs started his journey of swimming in 2013. From not being able to put his face in the water, he learned how to manage his childhood trauma and began competing in sprint and Olympic distance triathlons.

"As a Black triathlete and swimmer, I was taught by several gifted athletes who believed in my potential. We are looking to build out a program so others can receive the gift of this skill," he said.

Oregon has the 10th highest rate of deaths due to drowning nationwide at 1.4 deaths for every 100,000

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