

## Youth of All Colors Must Learn Water Safety

Olympic gold medal swimmer Cullen Jones had a narrow escape from drowning when he was just 5 years old. At a water park in Allentown, Penn., he came down a slide, shot underwater, and struggled to breathe until he blacked out. He didn't come to until his father pulled him from the pool and a life-guard resuscitated him.

It didn't faze him, he says. "When I was in high school, we had to learn to swim in freshman PE," he said. I think if it was made more accessible and required for PE then more people would be able to swim. Not a lot of inner-city African American kids have backyard pools. But everyone loves the water – unless they have faced

this kind of tragedy and they are afraid."

So why is it that so many African Americans don't swim?

Jones said fear was the main reason, and that fear is passed down through the generations. Parents can't swim and they fear drowning. And that fear is passed along to the next generation. Now is a good time to break that cycle, he says.

To help more families send their children to swim lessons, the USA Swimming Foundation, works with local partners, who provide free and low-cost lessons.

Sponsors Conoco Phillips have supported USA Swimming Foundation programs for 38 years.

PHOTO CREDIT: HELEN SILVAS



Cullen Jones at the Wattles Boys and Girls Club this week.

Watch the Video "Swim Class with Cullen Jones" online at [www.theskanner.com](http://www.theskanner.com)



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