

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!



Water. We, in this community, take it for granted. In our homes we have multiple taps: taps in bathrooms, laundry rooms, kitchens, garages, outside our homes, etc. Even in a drought, we still have access to it. With swim lessons, we teach our children the joy of water as early as they can walk!

Now, imagine living in a place where there are two taps for thousands of people. Literally, two taps for drinking, bathing, eating, and washing dishes. Swimming becomes a huge luxury. In Soweto, children are taught to fear bodies of water because the resources don't exist to teach children the joy that access to water brings.



When we arrived in Kliptown on July 28 this summer, we had no idea how much of an impact this community would make on each of us. While we were able to anticipate how rewarding teaching swim lessons would be for our group of 18 young adult swimmers, coaches and parents, we couldn't have had any sense of how we would be welcomed into the community.

The Armada Abroad Program was established to teach swim lessons to learners at KYP, while also collaborating with staff to create a sustainable swimming program in a community without the resources required to curb drowning rates. We were fortunate enough while there to make links for KYP staff with surrounding facilities, and will work to make sure those relationships will continue to grow.



This summer, after two years of pandemic delays, AAP traveled to Johannesburg for a service-based trip focused on establishing a swimming initiative with the Kliptown Youth Program, a community-based organization founded to provide a path out of poverty. This trip was the culmination of almost four years of planning. Over those four years, we fundraised, solicited in-kind donations from major sponsors, learned about the history and culture of South Africa, trained on how to become “learn-to-swim” instructors, and carefully planned an itinerary that would allow us to maximize our time with KYP. Because it was winter in

South Africa and heated pools are a rarity, we were forced to change pool facilities multiple times during our pre-trip planning. In the end, we were welcomed by the Wahoo Aquatic Swim Program, better hosts for which we could not have asked.

Early on in our trip, we realized that the connections between Wahoo, KYP, and AAP is what made our program such a success. Wahoo did more than provide a facility. They offered their own instructors to help grow the staff available to teach lessons (some of whom spoke Zulu, enormously helpful for student communication; the curriculum to run a “water safety” clinic for all swim learners that was considerate of cultural differences; and organizational skills that helped keep our demanding schedule on track every day.

KYP, our wonderful partners, not only provided us with the swim students—more than 130 youngsters—but coordinated bringing those learners to the aquatic center each day, which required getting special permission to miss class from three different local schools. KYP staff enthusiastically underwent intensive training from Armada coaches in order to continue lessons in our absence. They also provided a place for us to interact with their students after lessons each day—be it by assisting their academic tutors, helping the kitchen staff prepare meals for the hungry learners, or teaching us local songs and gumboot dancing.



Upon arrival at the facility, we shared gifts of swimsuits, goggles, and caps for every swimmer and KYP staff member provided to us by Nike Swim, Arena Swimwear, and local individuals and small businesses. After the gifts were received by the young students, post-deliverance, we were continually asked, “Do we really get to keep these and take them home?” KYP

shared stories with us of kids coming back hours after lessons still wearing their caps and goggles! In addition to the swim gear, we also



gifted track jackets, t-shirts, bags, flip flops, kick boards, noodles and more. All teaching equipment used during lessons was left with KYP for future use.

As part of the sustainable swim program model, one of our young coaches wrote a manual. We printed and bound multiple copies and referenced them during a clinic that we ran with their staff. KYP was thrilled to have this resource and found it to be the key to continuing what we started.

During the two weeks, we worked on swimming progressions with more than 130 students aged 7-11. Each lesson was one-on-one and ranged from 15-25 minutes each day, depending on the curriculum. Most of the KYP learners had never seen a swimming pool before, and their bravery in the face of such a great new challenge was immense. By the end of the two weeks, most of the learners had overcome their fears and could safely move across the pool solo. A few ambitious swimmers were so enthusiastic that they dove for toys at the bottom of the pool!



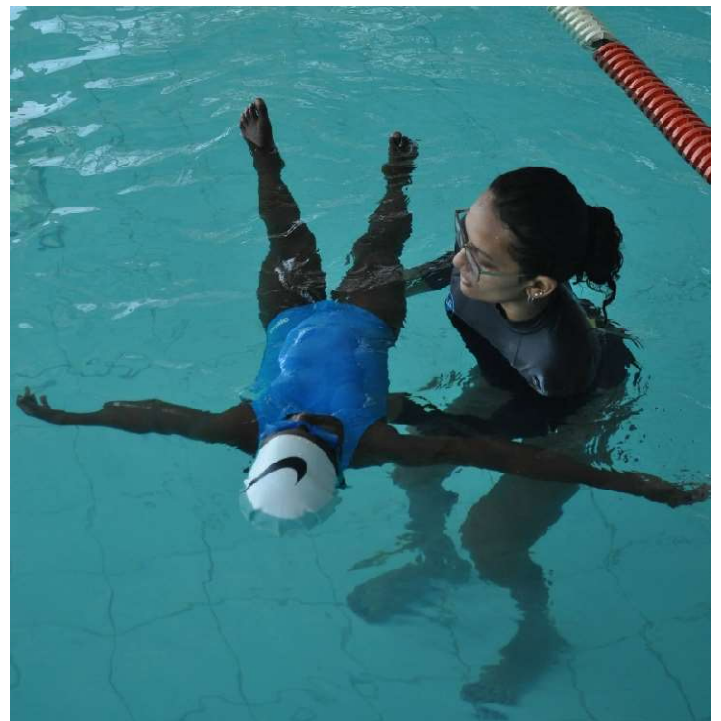
Additionally, our coaches worked with about 8-10 KYP staff members to train them as swim instructors. In the beginning, they worked as a small group, learning terms and holds for swimming progressions. By the end of the program, they were shadowing our lessons and leading lessons of their own!



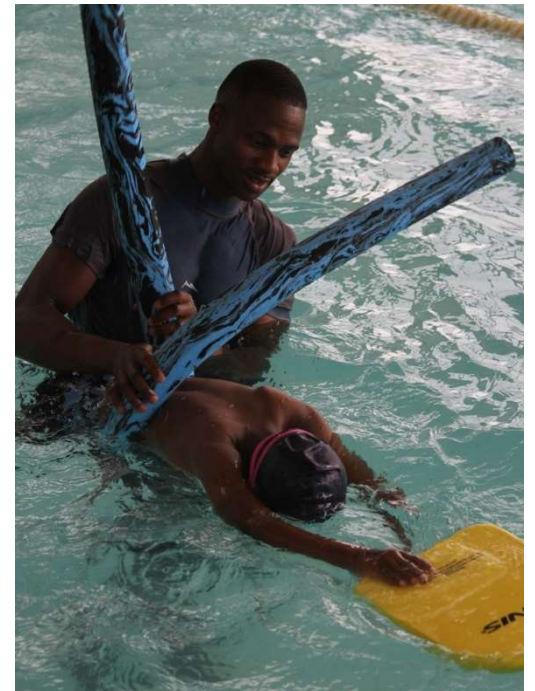
SWIM LESSONS AT WAHOO



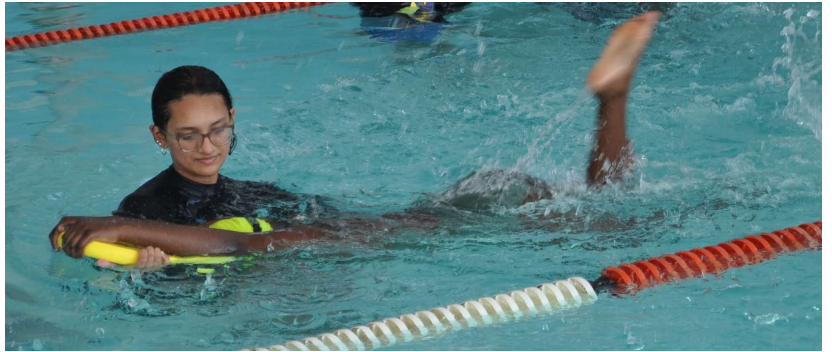
SWIM LESSONS AT WAHOO



SWIM LESSONS AT WAHOO



SWIM LESSONS AT WAHOO



SWIM LESSONS AT WAHOO



HANGING WITH OUR PENPALS



HANGING WITH OUR PENPALS



SINGING AND GUMBOOT DANCING AT KYP



ASSISTING THE TUTORS AT KYP



THE FACES OF OUR NEW FRIENDS AT KYP



THE FACES OF OUR NEW FRIENDS AT KYP



Feedback from KYP has been extraordinarily positive. Parents of the swim learners were thrilled and asked if they themselves would have the opportunity to learn to swim with us next time around. Thando Bezana, KYP Assistant Director, recently sent us the following text “We thank you, your family, and the Armada team for bringing such an amazing and life changing experience to our kids at KYP. We are also grateful that this project will be continuing one way or the other.” Keke Belayi, the KYP swimming program manager, said “The swimming lessons you did with our learners were really amazing. . . they are still talking about them.”



Throughout our time in Johannesburg, we learned much about the history of South Africa and the lasting impact that Apartheid has had on communities like Kliptown. Led by Thando Bezana, KYP founding staff member and a certified tour guide, we visited many historical sites, including Constitution Hill, the Apartheid Museum, Nelson Mandela’s home in Soweto, the Hector Pieterse Memorial, the Cradle of Humankind, and the site of the signing of the Freedom Charter in 1955. Thando also ensured that our group learned local customs

like Zulu dance and gumboot dancing, alongside our peers from KYP, making the entire experience more rewarding than imagined.

Many people have asked us why we needed to go overseas to teach swim lessons. By visiting Kliptown, and immersing ourselves in their community culture, we created a relationship with our swim learners based on trust. We learned as much from this experience as our swimmers, if not more. Swimming is a luxury, but it’s something everyone deserves access to and we were privileged enough to be the people to introduce this skill to KYP.

While we successfully launched this program and helped KYP to create the foundation for a swim program, we know there is so much more to do. Our hope is to sustain what we started in the following ways:

1. support KYP financially to ensure that they can keep teaching lessons to this group and others as the current group ages out,
2. keep building strategic partnerships locally in Johannesburg to support KYP,
3. continue to act as a resource to KYP in answering questions and hosting clinics via social media and other forms of digital communication with their instructors, and
4. return with a new group of AAP instructors in 3 years to work with new KYP learners, as their community will continue to grow and shift with time.



We can't begin to show enough gratitude to our donors that made this initiative possible. Your generosity allowed us to meet and surpass our goals, so we extend a huge THANK YOU from each and every one of us.

To continue to support the program, please visit our website (<http://www.armadaabroad.org>), as we will post updates as often as possible.

With continued gratitude from,

Jessica Getz, Executive Director
& The entire 2022 AAP team

