In partnership with the USA Swimming Foundation’s Make a Splash Initiative, the Fort Worth Drowning Prevention Coalition (FWDPC) provided drowning prevention and water safety lessons to at-risk neighborhoods during the summer of 2016 with a specific focus on the Como neighborhood in Fort Worth, Texas. These lessons consisted of both in-water training targeted to non-swimming children as well as on-deck water safety education for parents and caregivers.

The year prior, during the summer of 2015 the Como neighborhood suffered 4 pediatric drownings. Como is 1.2 square miles in area with a population of just under 4,500, largely consisting of single-parent households, with nearly 40% of residents living under the poverty level.

Working with many community organizations, in summer 2015, the FWDPC developed a plan to recruit non-swimming adults from the Como community to enroll in their late-summer program with the objective to learn to swim and serve as ambassadors in their community through the winter and spring of 2016. With the help of funding from the USA Swimming Foundation, the FWDPC and YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth partnered to provide drowning prevention and learn-to-swim lessons specific to the Como Community beginning May 2016.

In all, 315 children were equipped with life-saving skills between May and August of 2016. All children were offered the opportunity to enroll in subsequent swim lessons either at the YMCA or at a municipal pool at no charge. Additionally, 310 parents and caregivers participated in classroom water safety training throughout the summer. Finally 125 volunteers completed training and worked tirelessly throughout the summer to make the community safer in and around water.

The Como community is tight-knit and thus learning to swim became an intergenerational commitment. Non-swimming grandparents brought grandchildren and they learned to swim side-by-side. Fearful adults were cheered on by supportive children who took to the water naturally. Community leaders who learned to swim the previous summer in an effort to become learn-to-swim ambassadors within their community served as volunteers during the summer of 2016. Together, they changed lives and saved lives with their good work.