

HBO's Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel Will Feature U of M Swim Study

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An upcoming episode of HBO's *Real Sports with Bryant Gumbel* will feature a study conducted by University of Memphis professors about minority children and swimming. The show will air Tuesday, Sept. 15, at 9 p.m. Participating in the research were Carol and Dick Irwin, Joris Drayer, and Tim Ryan, all faculty members in the Department of Health and Sport Sciences in the U of M's College of Education.

Drowning is a leading cause of death for children ages 5-14 in the United States, and the inability to swim is one of the most often cited reasons why children drown. The U of M study showed that 58 percent of black children have limited swimming ability, a rate double that of their white peers. African-American children drown at a rate more than three times that of white children. The reasons are many, including income status, lack of access to pools and swimming lessons, and the fact that their parents never learned how to swim.

A local solution was Make a Splash Mid-South, a program inspired by the nationwide research, to teach as many minority children as possible how to swim. The pilot program taught nine children how to swim and then conducted a developmental/competitive swim meet held at the U of M's pool in which the pilot children participated. The program grew to include 60 students this summer.

The U of M's Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change supported the research. Through a spring Diversity in Swimming event, Make a Splash was able to offer scholarships to the Memphis Tiger Swimming Club to two Central High students and provide swimming lessons to 30 black children.

"Based on national drowning trends and the recent nationwide research conducted by faculty in the Department of Health and Sport Sciences, the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute was excited to sponsor an engaged scholarship project that brought University and community members together to address this problem at the local level through the Make a Splash Mid-South pilot program," said Dr. Paul M. Wright, the Institute's associate director. "The program evaluation funded by the Hooks Institute reflected very well on the feasibility and promise of community-based outreach programs to increase minority participation in swimming. We are extremely pleased that the program is being sustained and expanded in the Memphis community, and we believe it could be replicated in other cities to increase participation in swimming and reduce the risk of drowning among minority youth."

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