



# AN INSPIRING SWIM TEACHER FOR CHILDREN OF ALL ABILITIES

If your child is enrolled in one of Elena Mulligan's swim classes or you can schedule private swim lessons with her, consider yourself very lucky. Elena is a wildly popular swim instructor with the Fairfax County Park Authority at the G.W. Rec Center, with a passion for teaching children of all abilities. She enjoys seeing the transformation and growth in her students. "My favorite thing about teaching is seeing a kid who is terrified to put their face in the water to becoming the best swimmer in the class and having fun!" says Elena.



Mulligan has been teaching children's swim lessons for 8 years, with the last 3 years teaching for the Park Authority. She has always loved swimming and was a "swim team kid". She says swimming is not the easiest thing to learn but an important survival skill everyone should have. Being a Maryland native, she was amazed when she moved to Virginia and realized how frequently residents are within close proximity to a body of water. With drowning being the leading cause of death in children, she emphasizes that every child should take lessons. Her advice to parents is "get your kids in the water as soon as you can". She explains that getting children comfortable in the water at a young age and having them put their face in the water is a critical first step to learning how to swim.

Mulligan's passion for teaching has garnered the appreciation of her students' parents. Amy Buckley, the mom of a 10-year-old student named Mason, has this to say: "She (Elena) was an amazing group instructor. She was great at getting the children to respond to her, especially Mason, who is high functioning autistic and sometimes gets forgotten in peer settings as he tends to become very quiet and can distance himself physically from a group. Under Elena's gentle hand and patience, Mason has thrived at swimming. She worked at his pace but doesn't let him fool her into thinking he cannot do something! Mason responds to her in ways he has NEVER responded to another swim instructor! He is excited to see her, works hard when he is with her and leaves more confident than ever!" said Ms. Buckley. "I know my little boy will safely know how to swim and enjoy it as much as I do, because of Ms. Elena and her amazing ability to reach even the hardest of children! Her love of her job is evident in all she does."



Elena's parting advice to parents is to remember that everyone's learning process is different and that everyone learns at their own pace. "Trust the instructor and trust your kid" says Elena.