



CCL Swim Classes Empowered Alton Man to Conquer His Biggest Fear

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GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College Corporate and Community Learning swim student Billy Williams, of Alton, spent most of his life terrified of water. When he was 9 years old, he watched his older brother, Jimmy Williams, drown during a camping trip.

“Swimming was the biggest fear of my life,” Williams said. “I didn’t even want to be near water, and I would panic the minute I stepped in it.”

Even though he was traumatized, Williams wanted to swim, and even added learning how to do so to his bucket list before meeting his wife, Andrea Williams.

“Andrea and I were taking vacations, and I got tired of watching everyone else have all the fun,” Williams said. “I decided I wanted to overcome my fear once and for all. I didn’t think my brother would want me to use his death as an excuse not to learn how to swim, so I did it for him as well.”

Williams joined CCL’s swim class a few years ago, and has now overcome his fear of water. He continues to swim each Saturday as a part of his class.

“At first, when I started swim classes, I panicked every time I got in the water, but I never gave up,” Williams said. “Everyone was there for me, rooting me on and helping me out. They wanted me to succeed. Now, I am very comfortable in the water. I’m not a great swimmer, but I am getting there. I even jumped off the diving board, which is something I never thought I would do.”



All of his efforts paid off last fall when he and his wife visited the Dominican Republic, and Williams, for the first time, swam outside of his swim class with his wife. Now, he has set new swimming goals for himself, including swimming further and working on his breathing.

Williams encourages others to overcome their fears, especially of water, and he said he would love to help others do just that.

“The fear that I went through was overwhelming,” Williams said. “And now, it is gone. It just goes to show that you can overcome anything in your life, especially with the help of good people during a good class.”

In the end, swimming actually helps Williams feel closer to his late brother.

“I feel like when I am in the water, my brother is there with me helping me,” Williams said.

Adult swim classes are enrolling now. The basic course is designed for non-swimmers and for swimmers who need to work on endurance and refining their strokes. The small group sessions are taught by Red Cross certified water safety instructors in a relaxed atmosphere with one-on-one assistance. New classes start March 19 or March 22, and the registration deadline is prior to the start date. Summer classes will also be offered.

For more information on swim classes, including how to register, contact Kathy Conlee, swim program coordinator, at (618) 468-5760. For a complete listing of Corporate and Community Learning offerings visit www.lc.edu/ccl.

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