



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FIRST 5 RIVERSIDE COUNTY PARTNERS WITH DESERT RECREATION DISTRICT TO EXPAND SWIMMING LESSON ACCESS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN**

The Riverside County Children and Families Commission approved \$280,000 in new funding to support drowning prevention efforts through the Desert Recreation District (DRD). The contract runs now through the end of June 2026.

The funding will support over 2,000 children from the Coachella Valley who can receive free safe group swimming classes this summer. Riverside County Supervisor V. Manuel Perez, who represents the Coachella Valley in the Fourth District and also serves on the First 5 Riverside County Children and Families Commission, joined in voting to approve the funding.

“With the partnership of First 5 Riverside County and the Desert Recreation District, we are able to expand access to free swimming classes in the desert region this summer,” said Supervisor Perez. “This program will provide these opportunities to families with children through age five, all throughout the Coachella Valley, with classes available in Cathedral City, Coachella, Indio, La Quinta and Mecca that families can sign up for. This is important because swimming lessons teach an activity for exercise, recreation and fun, while teaching how to be safe around water.”

While drowning incidents spike during warm summer months, the lessons will be offered year-round to teach children and families how to properly follow water safety. Drowning incidents are the leading cause of death for children ages 1-4. Between 2021-2022 in Riverside County, there were 124 drowning incidents for children 5 and under with 7 of them being fatal.

DRD General Manager Kevin Kalman said, “Drowning can be prevented through proper water safety skills and measures. We are very proud to partner with First 5 Riverside County to support drowning prevention for Coachella Valley youth, providing them with water-safety training that will last a lifetime. We have provided swim lessons to thousands of youth over the decades, and we look forward to continuing to offer these lifesaving skills for years to come.”

Children require constant supervision when in or near a body of water. In the event that children accidentally fall into a body of water, having completed swimming lessons helps increase their water safety. Lessons through DRD include classes with parent involvement depending on the child’s age. Class instruction includes teaching children to float on their backs, safely enter and exit the pool, and gain comfort in the water. Basic swimming fundamentals are introduced to children who are preschool-aged.

The contract marks an expansion of First 5 Riverside County’s investment in preventing drowning incidents countywide, including in Jurupa Valley, Temecula, French Valley, and the Desert area. DRD class schedules vary by location, and are taught year-round at the La Quinta site.

For more information on DRD swimming classes including how to enroll, visit [MyRecreationDistrict.com/swim-water-programs](http://MyRecreationDistrict.com/swim-water-programs).

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*[First 5 Riverside County](http://www.First5Riverside.org), the Riverside County Children & Families Commission, is funded by Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues. First 5 Riverside County supports early childhood development through educational outreach, partnerships and funding for services that benefit children, from prenatal through age 5, their families, and communities. For more information about First 5 Riverside County programs and other funded services, call 800 266-3880 or visit [www.First5Riverside.org](http://www.First5Riverside.org).*

*[Desert Recreation District](http://MyRecreationDistrict.com) (DRD) is the largest park and recreation district in California, covering over 1,800 square miles and serving more than 380,000 residents throughout the greater Coachella Valley. In addition to managing, maintaining, and assisting in maintaining more than 30 parks and recreation facilities and creating and delivering quality programs, services, and classes, thanks to strategic partnerships we have been able to bring essential services such as Rapid-Response Food Distributions, COVID-19 Testing and vaccinations, Flu Shots, a Distance-Learning Program and more to Valley residents. This community collaborative approach allows us to not only provide barrier-free and safe recreational activities, but to also bring critical resources where they are needed, thereby helping to create stronger communities and healthier citizens. Learn more at [MyRecreationDistrict.com](http://MyRecreationDistrict.com)*