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Humber prof transforms tragedy into teachable moment for newcomers

Lessons for non-swimmers spearheaded in memory of late student who drowned

NEWS

May 29, 2017 by [Cynthia Reason](#) Etobicoke Guardian

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Ten international students at Humber College recently completed nine weeks of swimming lessons funded by Ignite, Humber's student organization, and the School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism. - Humber College/photos

When Humber College professor Anke Föller-Carroll learned of the drowning death of a former student, she vowed to transform the tragedy into a teachable moment.

The result of her efforts? A recently wrapped nine-week program of swimming lessons for Humber international students funded almost completely by Ignite, Humber's student organization, and the college's School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism.

"We did (the lessons) in memory of a former student who, unfortunately, drowned in 2015," Föller-Carroll said of Satvir Singh, a 22-year-old student from India who died after accidentally falling into Brampton's Professor's Lake on Aug. 23, 2015.

Singh, like so many new immigrants to Canada, simply didn't know to swim — and neither, Föller-Carroll soon learned, did many of his newcomer classmates.

"When I went to his candlelight vigil, I asked all his friends if they knew how to swim, and they all looked at me very puzzled and said, 'No, Miss,'" she said.

"I asked why that was, and they said it was either not culturally appropriate where they were from, or there wasn't a clean body of water available to them, or there just wasn't someone there to teach them how to swim."

Föller-Carroll went home that night to research and found a 2010 study by the Canadian Lifesaving Society that cited new Canadians as four times less likely to know how to swim than people born in Canada.

Armed with that information, she set out to spearhead lessons at the college's North Campus community pool for the non-swimmers among Humber's contingent of nearly 500 international students.

"In general, the Canadian experience is one beside the water, in the water or on the water, so (swimming) is really a skill everyone needs to learn," she said.

Föller-Carroll — with support from Humber's School of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism and Ignite club — initiated a nine-week program of adult beginner swim lessons for students beginning in March.

Rinkle Anaghan, an interior decorating student from India, and Alicea Scott, a biotechnology student from Jamaica, were two of the 10 international students who participated in the lessons, which just wrapped up this past week.

Anaghan said she was compelled to sign up for the lessons after reading about Singh's drowning.

"I was a non-swimmer, too, so I thought maybe one day that could be me. It's better to take the lessons and be safe," she said, noting that she never swam back home in India.

Like Anaghan, Scott said she plans to enrol in further swimming lessons to build on the skills she's learned so far. "I am definitely more comfortable and confident in the water now, but I plan to continue because I want to get it fully down."

After watching the students complete their final lesson on May 24, Föller-Carroll said she was very pleased with the results.

"I'm happy they learned that respect for water and understand what it takes to be in there now," she said. "It was a huge, huge step for them all."



by [Cynthia Reason](#)

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