

Dear Hardworking swim advocates of Phoenixville PA,

My name is Cullen Jones, I am a 2x Olympian and 4x Olympic medalist and I would like to thank you for your tireless help with making the vision of the Philadelphia Aquatic Center a reality. As an advocate for water safety, I am always in full support of establishing a place for people to learn to swim. As a survivor of a near drowning myself, I have made it my platform to teach the importance of learn to swim. My goal is for no parent to live the fear my parents felt the day I almost drowned. I was an eager five year old with my parent at Dorney Park. My family decided to get on the largest ride. My mother knew I had not had swim lessons but they felt confident with the lifeguards and both of them present I would be fine.

I proceeded down the ride, after my father. Yelling to my heart's content, I crashed in to the pool of water at the end of the ride and flipped upside down. At this same time, my father was handing his innertube to the next patient rider. Unable to lift myself up I began to drown. Thanks to the quick response of the Dorney Park lifeguards, they pulled me out of the water within 30 seconds. Unfortunately I was unconscious and had to be revived. I woke up and said, "What's the next ride we were going on because I was a 5 year old at a water park!

Although this story has a happy ending, so many families across the U.S. do not have the same outcome. Swimming is a life skill and it has always been my mission to teach our country's citizens the importance of learn to swim. 64% percent of African Americans, 54% of Latin Americans and 40% of Caucasian Americans have little to no swimming ability. Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. The drowning rate in the U.S. is at an epidemic rate and places like the Philadelphia Aquatic Center are developed to treat and combat this need. This facility will help the community.

To those learn to swim advocates, thank you for your work in serving the Phoenixville and greater Philadelphia Area. You are saving lives!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cullen Jones", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above a horizontal line.

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Cullen Jones