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## Local School for Students With Autism Aims to Draw the Line on Drowning

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla., April 14, 2023 – Children with autism are 160 times more likely to drown than their neurotypical peers, according to the Autism Society of Florida. During Autism Acceptance Month, Connections Education Center of the Palm Beaches is working to bring awareness to this key issue through their Draw the Line on Drowning campaign that provides helpful information and raises funds for swim lessons.

Connections is a nonprofit school that includes adaptive swim lessons in the curriculum for all students. “Many children with autism are drawn to water, which is all around us in Palm Beach County,” says Debra Johnson, Executive Director and Principal of Connections. “It’s essential for children with autism – and in fact all children – to learn to swim.”

Connections’ Lead Swim and Fitness Instructor Jovany Brunet-Naranjo adds, “People with autism learn differently than their neurotypical peers, and they need differentiated and adapted swim lessons that use a variety of teaching strategies.”

Here are six tips for families and caregivers of individuals with autism to help draw the line on drowning:

1. **Always watch the water.** When enjoying time around water, make sure someone is watching the water at all times. It’s easy to get distracted, especially at parties and cookouts, so take shifts as the designated water-watcher to stay mentally fresh and alert.
2. **Use alarms and chimes.** Install and activate alarms on every door in your house so you know when someone opens a door.
3. **Install a pool fence.** If you have a pool at home, install and always lock the pool fence.
4. **Remove toys from pools.** After supervised playtime in the pool, remove all toys that may attract a child’s attention and tempt them to jump in to retrieve the toy.
5. **Be aware of nearby water.** Survey your area and be mindful of bodies of water near your home. Water often acts as a magnet for individuals with autism who may be drawn by reflections, sounds or animals.
6. **Act fast.** If a child goes missing, check nearby water first. It only takes seconds for someone to slip underwater.

During Autism Acceptance Month, the school is raising funds to support adaptive swim lessons for their 120+ students and young adults with autism. You can help by visiting <https://www.connectedpb.com>.

### About Connections:

Connections is a nonprofit educational center that delivers high-quality, specialized instruction to students with autism in Palm Beach County. They serve students ages 3-22 years and offer an innovative program for young adults with autism. Learn more at [connectedpb.com](https://connectedpb.com).

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