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**Ashland Community Health Foundation**  
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## Over \$8,800 Granted to Ashland YMCA for Swimming & Water Safety

*Preschool and K-5 students will learn crucial skills*

**ASHLAND** — The Ashland Family YMCA received a grant for over \$8,800 to support access to youth swimming lessons from the **Chuck Butler Memorial Aquatics Endowment**. The endowment was established at Ashland Community Health Foundation (ACHF) by Jeff and Alexi (Butler) McCullough in memory of local philanthropist Chuck Butler, and his enthusiasm for aquatic sports and water safety.

Drowning is the number one cause of death for children ages 1-4 (Center for Disease Control, June 2024). Basic swimming and water safety skills are a proven and effective way to prevent drowning. However, access to swimming lessons is a barrier.

To address barriers to swimming lessons, the Ashland YMCA piloted a program in 2024-2025 with their preschool students located at Walker and Helman elementary schools, and Talent elementary school. Children were bused during the school day to the YMCA to learn crucial water safety and swimming skills.

With over 80% of children in the YMCA's Preschools and Afterschool Care programs receiving financial assistance, there was a clear need to continue and expand their swimming program to further increase access. The Butler Endowment grant funding allows the YMCA to grow the program, reaching currently enrolled preschoolers and expanding to their Afterschool Care programs. The Afterschool Care program provides a safe and enriching environment for K-5th graders after the school day ends.

Over 100 preschool and afterschool students are expected to participate in lessons. Funds will be used to operate the program, pay for bussing students from three preschool sites, and supply free swimsuits to all participants.

"The kids loved choosing a swimsuit and were so excited to start swim lessons. We are so grateful for ACHF's partnership for our preschool and afterschool programs!" said Kelsey Rittenhouse, YMCA.

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*Photos enclosed by permission of the Ashland Family YMCA.*

Founded in 1977, Ashland Community Health Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) leading philanthropic efforts to advance innovative and equitable approaches to community health and wellness. Contributions to the foundation, including the Chuck Butler Memorial Aquatics Endowment, may be tax-deductible and can be given securely through our website at [achfoundation.org](http://achfoundation.org) or mailed to our office at 123 Clear Creek Drive, Suite 101, Ashland, OR 97520. For additional information about funds at ACHF, contact Executive Director, Stephanie Roland, at 541-482-0367 x2.