

## Summer a chance to brush up on swimming skills and find fall jobs as lifeguards



If the arrival of warmer weather has you thinking about the lazy days of summer, getting your feet wet and brushing up your swimming skills could land you a plum job as a lifeguard in Aurora this fall.

Courses in aquatics leadership will be offered by the Town this fall.

These courses will allow you to become a certified lifeguard over the summer and potentially could lead to employment in the fall at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex and the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

‘We’re looking at individuals who enjoy being in a water and pool environment,’ says Adrian Wong, Recreation Supervisor for the Town of Aurora. ‘A lot of times kids learn how to swim but where do you go beyond that? We offer programs for swimming and we slowly transition them to life saving. It is great that they know how to swim and keep themselves safe, but it is also very important for them to contribute and give back to the community where they can not only keep themselves safe but others safe – understanding what to do and what not to do, if they do get into a sticky situation, how do they get themselves out of it? How can they help others if they are in need? We want them to go beyond individual development to how they can contribute so others can also benefit from the pool.’

Lifeguard Isabella Richards has had a life-long affinity for water. She remembers her mom taking her to ‘parent and tot’ classes and, from there, getting all her swimming lessons at the SARC and the AFLC. Now, she’s a leader among the lifeguards and says being able to help the community is one of the most rewarding aspects of the job.

‘Whether it is giving someone a Band-Aid or helping someone pass a swim lesson, it’s really rewarding to see these kids come in,’ she says. ‘They’re terrified of the water, afraid they are going to drown, but they get more comfortable. When I first started, there was a kid who refused to put on a life jacket; he thought they were scary. On the last day of classes, I called it an ‘astronaut suit’ and he fell in love – now he always has one on because he knows it keeps him safe and his mom almost broke down in tears. Those little things of helping kids succeed is so rewarding.’

This sentiment is shared by Mr. Wong who says it is very rewarding for him to be able to provide youngsters with the life skills they need to go into the water with confidence.

‘My parents made me take swimming lessons and I didn’t really enjoy it until I took a life-guarding course,’ he says. ‘It had a lot of great ideas, from preventing accidents from happening, to being prepared, expecting the unexpected, how to be responsible team members – you need to do your part and you need to contribute to your team to make ends meet. All those concepts really resonated

with me. It is who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do and how I wanted to live my life. It was character-building.

?Kids may not have the best strokes, but them knowing they are going to be safe, parents knowing they are going to be safe and are respectful of the water is something you can't really learn in a textbook,? he said. ?Being part of an individual's journey is very rewarding.?

Your personal journey as a life guard can be as simple as logging onto the Town's website at [aurora.ca/aquaticleadership](http://aurora.ca/aquaticleadership) and exploring some of the programs on offer.

The Zero to Hero program is a fast-track program open to teens and adults who want to pursue a secondary career, including stay-at-home parents with children now old enough to be going off to school and might be looking for something to do during the day.

Certification programs are also offered in partnership with the York Region District School Board that allow students to learn the fundamentals of what they need for the job while earning high school credits.

?Every time I do something or I see one of the staff do something that changes a kid's life in that way makes me really happy,? says Isabella.

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