

# It's about progress, not perfection

The very first child Beth Campbell taught to swim was a boy with autism who lived on a lake in Massachusetts when she was 15 years old. In the nearly 50 years since that summer, Beth has taught thousands of children how to be safe around the water and to swim "their" stroke. When asked to remember some of her favorite students, Beth's eyes lit up about one special child in particular.

Carsen was your typical energetic 4-year-old. That is until her parents started to notice changes in her gait and speech. After 10 years of doctors' visits throughout the country, Carsen was diagnosed with a COX-20 gene deficiency. "She is one of 27 documented cases of this disease that has robbed her of many of her abilities, the biggest ones being her speech, movement and energy. What was once your average energetic child that enjoyed surfing, ziplining, archery and adaptive kayaking, her world has become smaller and opportunities to have fun and just be a teenager have started to dwindle." says her mom, Karen.

When Carsen met Beth, she was still able to walk into the George Washington Rec Center pool on her own. But with each passing year Carsen lost more and more of her mobility and ability to access the pool. Beth was always one step ahead. She figured out a way to get Carsen in the pool using a wheelchair and ramp. "When that became too challenging, she found other ways to access the pool. Even advocating for the installation of a pool lift to allow Carsen the dignity of entering the pool without the assistance of two and sometimes three people.", Karen added.

Being in the pool is freeing for Carsen, whether she is swimming or not. Beth has made that possible for her and so much more. Carsen is speech impaired, so she and Beth communicate via Communication Cards. This allows Beth the ability to understand Carsen's needs in the pool. Her mom says, "Carsen is motivated because Beth believes in her and always encourages her to persevere." Karen went on to add, "She is like a part of our family, and we could not be

where we are today without her dedication, perseverance and knowledge of teaching swimming."

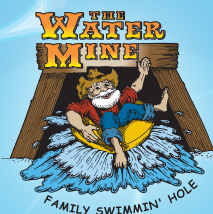
Beth Campbell doesn't give up. She has a unique ability to always make every child feel special, and to motivate them to be the best version of themselves. And sometimes a special child will allow Beth to become the best version of herself. Carsen will continue to write her own story, and her swim instructor will be there with her every stroke of the way.

If you are interested in volunteering to assist one of the hundreds of students in FCPA's Access and Inclusion classes please visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ada-inclusion](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/ada-inclusion) for more information.



## SENSORY FRIENDLY TIMES AT THE WATER PARKS

Open to all with disabilities and their families only.



### THE WATER MINE

June 20  
August 8

10 - 11 a.m.

at Lake Fairfax Park  
1400 Lake Fairfax Dr., Reston  
703-471-5415



### OUR SPECIAL HARBOR

Wednesdays  
10 - 11 a.m.

at Franconia Park  
6601 Telegraph Rd., Alexandria  
703-922-9841