

## **Friends of Grant Park Pool**

**April 2005 Grant Request from United Way Atlanta's Community and Neighborhood Investments Fund**

**Name of group/organization:** Friends of the Grant Park Pool (FGPP)

**County:** Fulton

**Contact person's Name:** Melissa Devereaux

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### **1. Describe your "great idea." What will it accomplish? Please include goals & activities.**

On an average summer weekday, some 60 children (ages 6-12) per hour use the Grant Park pool during its "free swim" period, 1-4 p.m. Nearly all come to the pool without an adult; most have few or no swimming skills. Our idea is to offer free swimming lessons at the pool this summer, available on a drop-in basis, and administered by city-employed water safety instructors. We hope to:

- Give these children a fun, useful, and possibly life-saving skill – the ability to swim -- that they can take pride in.
- Reward them for choosing to spend their free time constructively at the pool (as well as encourage them to keep making such positive choices).
- Encourage city officials to fund this program at Grant Park and other pools in future years, once its success is demonstrated.
- By offering lessons to some 30 children per day, significantly reduce the "bather load" that the lifeguard staff must supervise. This will help make the pool safer for everyone.

### **A. How does your "great idea" create a sense of community?**

Children walk, bike, and ride scooters to the Grant Park pool from neighborhoods all over the area -- Boulevard Heights, Benteen, Chosewood Park, Custer/McDonough/Guice, Summerhill, Grant Park and Ormewood Park. The lessons will foster relationships among these children, between the children and the instructors, and between the children and the pool staff. Further, by making the pool experience more positive for everyone, it will increase residents' sense of ownership in this valuable community resource.

### **B. Please describe how the individuals who will benefit from your "great idea" will participate in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of it.**

Those planning and implementing the program are primarily:

- Community residents who use the pool, and who, along with their families, will benefit from the improved safety and more family-friendly environment this program will engender.
- City and pool staff, who will benefit because these lessons and the resulting higher safety level will make their jobs less difficult.

As the program gets under way, participating children will be asked for feedback. This information will be used to improve the program as it evolves. We will also call parents/guardians to request their feedback on the program. And, family members will be invited to a weekend ceremony/celebration honoring the lesson participants. We hope this will help these families feel welcome at the pool, and thus make more use of it. We also hope that when they see their children's success, the parents/guardians may be inspired to develop their own water-safety skills.

### **C. How have members of your group, local residents, and organizations already contributed time and/or resources to your "great idea"?**

FGPP has formed a close working partnership with Atlanta City Council, the city Parks and Recreation Department, and the Grant Park Pool manager. Bureau of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Commissioner Diane Harnell Cohen and Recreation Director Truman Tolefree have encouraged the Friends to pursue funding for this "great idea" and have set up a trust fund within the Bureau's budget to manage any independent funding the group obtains. Further, Aquatics Director Curtis Winston has pledged to assign a swimming instructor through the Bureau of Aquatics. (For liability reasons, the city must manage funds for this program, and we must use water safety instructors trained and employed by the city.)

FGPP will support the program by hosting a kick-off party, encouraging participation, and recognizing and rewarding children who participate. FGPP will also provide volunteers to help with the lessons.

More generally, FGPP has established partnerships with several local organizations and businesses that support our goals. On June 18, Hands On Atlanta will send hundreds of volunteers to renovate and beautify the pool and grounds. FGPP secured funding from Adams Realtors and the Grant Park Neighborhood Association, to help establish a website ([www.grantparkpool.org](http://www.grantparkpool.org)) and publicize our mission. And, noted Atlanta artist Waldo Vinces has agreed to donate his time to create a mural at the facility in June.

**2. What does the success of your "great idea" look like?**

- At least 200 children take the lessons during the summer.
- The instructors and pool staff get to know by name the children who regularly participate.
- At least 20% of the non-swimming children taking lessons become swimmers.
- Children who learn to swim, or improve their swimming skills, are recognized on a banner displayed at the pool and are honored with a small prize (a swimming accessory or pool toy).
- The pool's lifeguards report that this program helped them to keep the pool safe.

**3. Why does your group exist? OR What circumstances/events led to the creation of your group?**

FGPP exists to help revitalize the Grant Park Pool into a clean, safe facility that is welcoming to everyone. Our grass-roots group was formed in fall 2004, after some residents who regularly used the pool met informally to discuss two primary concerns:

- The disrepair of the facility, which is more than 30 years old.
- Safety risks resulting from a small staff that is challenged with supervising large numbers of children using the pool without adult oversight.

The group later circulated a survey at community events, and found high levels of interest in, and support for, improving the pool. FGPP then sought formal recognition as a subcommittee of the Grant Park Neighborhood Association ([www.gpna.org](http://www.gpna.org)). It now includes more than 125 volunteers, serving on several committees seeking to address specific areas in need of improvement: facilities renovation, program development, concessions, fundraising, and community awareness.

**4. Please describe the skills, abilities, talents, and resources of your group members.**

Our co-founders, Melissa Devereaux and Susan Rouse, have demonstrated organizing and fund-raising skills. Devereaux is a former development director for Hands On Atlanta and board chairperson for Odyssey Family Counseling Center. Rouse is a community organizer who partnered with KaBoom and Home Depot to build a new playground in Grant Park in 2003, raising over \$100,000 for that project.

Our diverse membership also includes attorneys, CPAs, small business owners, educators, artists, journalists and stay-at-home parents, as well as enthusiastic swimmers and amateur athletes.

Not only do our members live in the area and use the pool, but most have worked to improve our community in other volunteer capacities, from local neighborhood associations to the Neighborhood Charter School to the Porch Press (the free community newspaper).

**5. How much money are you requesting from the Community and Neighborhood Investments Fund?**

\$1,500

**Show how this money will be spent:**

**List other funders and amounts received:**

<i>Item</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Funders</i>	<i>Amounts</i>
<b>1. Swim Instructor Wages</b> (15 hours a week from June 20-Aug 5 @ \$12/hour)	<b>\$1,260.00</b>	<b>(none)</b>	
<b>2. Speedo Junior Swim Goggles</b> (10 @ \$8/each)	<b>\$80.00</b>		
<b>3. Toypedo Bandit Underwater Swim Toy</b> (20 @ \$5/each)	<b>\$100.00</b>		
<b>4. Banner</b>	<b>\$60.00</b>		

**Why is this amount critical to the success of your "great idea"?**

FGPP cannot implement this program without funds to pay the hourly wage of a city swim instructor. The goggles and swim toys will serve as incentives and rewards for children participating in the program, and they can enjoy using them in the pool with their improved swimming skills. The banner will advertise the program to all those who come to the pool, and will recognize those children who participate.