



Media Release

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## Selwyn Aquatic Centre supports young swimmer

A Rolleston youngster has beaten the odds to prove she can swim.

Emma Bolton has been attending swimming lessons at the Selwyn Aquatic Centre for the past nine months.

The four-year old has mild cerebral palsy which affects the brain signals to her legs, but her mother Anna says “she doesn’t let it hold her back, if anything its motivation to prove she can work through it.”

Cerebral palsy is a permanent physical condition that affects muscle control and often causes problems with movement, co-ordination and balance. It is the most common physical disability in children, occurring in 1 in every 500 babies.

Before Emma started swimming she was unable to walk unaided and used a small walker to get around. Her parents were unsure if she would be able to walk unaided in future.

Mrs Bolton believes swimming, along with a Botox treatment to relax the muscles in her legs, has helped Emma learn to walk properly.

“It’s amazing to see how far Emma has come since she first started taking lessons at the Aquatic Centre. Not only can she move freely in the water now, but she can happily run around out of the water too,” says Mrs Bolton.

As her strength and abilities have developed she has become more independent and a big part of her success has been through learning in small groups of three children of a similar age.

“Emma is starting to balance and co-ordinate herself to safely move in the pool, float on her front and back with assistance, submerge under water and learn breath control,” says Preschool Swim Supervisor Jenny Heaton.

Mrs Bolton says Emma is more confident in the water now and enjoys jumping off the side into the water with the other kids. “She isn’t put off by a struggle so it’s refreshing to see her being treated like any other kid her age.”

“I am thankful for what the pool has offered our family and I only hope that anyone who may be in the same position will consider using the pool too,” she adds.

Swimming is a great form of exercise for all ages and abilities. It can also be beneficial to those who suffer from joint problems such as arthritis, and those recovering from an injury. Weight-bearing exercises such as running or jumping can stress the body, however swimming is a low-impact activity which emphasizes gentle and repetitive motion.

All of the pools at the Selwyn Aquatic Centre are accessible for people with physical disabilities and there is wheelchair access into the leisure, hydro therapy and lane pools. A hoist has also been installed by the spa pool to help people into the pool.

Ends

Photos attached:

1. *Four year old Emma Bolton swimming at the Selwyn Aquatic Centre.*
2. *Selwyn Aquatic Centre's Preschool Swim Supervisor Jenny Heaton teaching Emma Bolton to stand up in the pool.*

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