

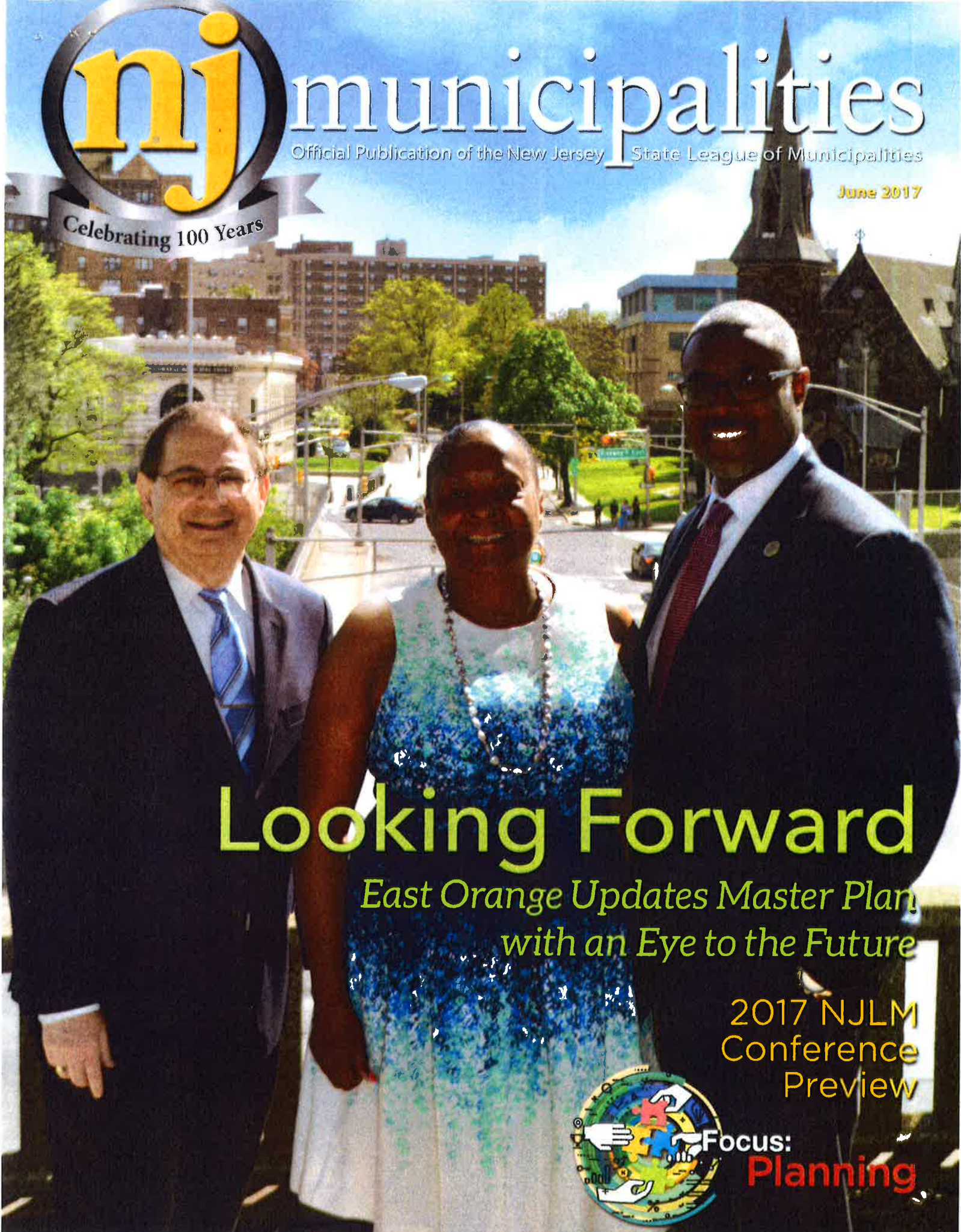


# nj municipalities

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Celebrating 100 Years



## Looking Forward

*East Orange Updates Master Plan  
with an Eye to the Future*

2017 NJLM  
Conference  
Preview



Focus:  
**Planning**



# Teaching Drowning Prevention

Fostering safe behaviors and educating the community

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**R**ecognizing that drowning is the number-one cause of death in children from ages from 1 to 4 and the second leading cause of death in children ages 1 to 14, the Safety Staff of the Summit Family Aquatic Center is not only committed to keeping their members and guests safe while at their facility, but they are committed to teaching them how to be safe in and around any bodies of water.

Launched in the summer of 2008, Summit's Parental Responsibility Campaign, created as a hybrid of a safety campaign embraced by the World Waterpark Association, states: "If your child is in the water, you should be too!"

In addition to signage throughout the center, literature was made available at the front desk and the slogan found its way to the back of each and every Safety Staff T-Shirt in the facility. The signage and T-shirts have empowered members and guests to be able to point this out to parents who perhaps have not come to understand their role in keeping their children safe.

### Free Rental Life Jackets

Free rental life jackets are the norm in public and commercial waterparks throughout the country, but here in New Jersey, many public aquatic facilities are still hesitant against providing them, or even allowing them. At the Summit Family Aquatic Center, members and especially guests are urged to use one

of the free rental life jackets displayed in the lobby. Guests who are unfamiliar with the facility are handed information in English and Spanish encouraging life jacket use. Staff is all trained in assisting visitors with the correct size and fit.

Information is also available on how to buy and bring your own Coast Guard Approved Life Jacket. Many folks show up with improper safety vests, so they are educated on how to buy the right one for their child and can use the one provided for that day. Not only has this reduced risk for Summit's members and guests, but also have reduced the risk to lifeguards in executing assists for those struggling. Summit has seen a 75% reduction in assists and rescues since the Free Life Jacket program's start in 2008. In the Summer of 2016 the City of Summit met its goal of a 100% safety goal with no rescues or assists.

Some communities have expressed concern about the cost of the Life Jackets. The possible loss of life and the trauma to all involved in a drowning incident has no price tag. Corporate

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sponsors and civic groups can help to offset the cost, as well as grants available through many national drowning prevention organizations.

### Swim Testing

Summit began keeping statistics on locations within their facility where children would often need assistance. It was found that most of the rescues or assists over the years were either in the deepest area of the pool or with slide use.

Children who were guests of the facility were statistically more prone to distress as they were not familiar with the facility, its water depths, or their swim ability.

Since the slides are extremely attractive, there is a height limitation for their use. Members and guests who do not meet the height requirement but feel they can swim strongly enough to use the slides are subject to swim testing conducted by SFAC Staff. Members who don't meet the height requirement but pass the test get a sticker on their membership card. Each time they enter the facility, they get a colored wristband to wear that day.

Guests who do not meet the height requirement are also entitled to take the "on demand" test provided by lifeguards and win a wristband for the day. These wristbands signal to the slide attendants and lifeguards that the child can handle the slides. This has cut down on incidents considerably and is known in the waterpark industry as best practice,

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**Young children most often drown in an unsecured backyard pool owned by a family member, friend or neighbor. Most child drowning victims were not expected to be in or near the water but slipped away unnoticed while adults were distracted by routine activities. But no body of water is safe around young curious children. Backyard ponds, buckets, and even toilets can be drowning hazards of which parents may not be aware.**

**The drowning statistics nationally have shown that there is less likelihood of a drowning in a public pool than a backyard pool but, even a fully licensed, professionally guarded facility does not guarantee a child's ultimate safety. It's a team effort that not only involves the lifeguards but the parents and caregivers as well.**



however it is slower to be incorporated in smaller municipal facilities.

### Spreading the Word

Since one-third of pool visitors' time is spent in the water, while two thirds of their time is spent on deck or doing something other than swimming, SFAC has developed attention-grabbing safety programs to educate and entertain. For less than \$1,000 you can turn your boring bathhouse or lobby into a closed circuit TV viewing experience with safety announcements, demonstrations, and safety entertainment. During "rain delays" it's a great way to keep the kids entertained and deliver a safety message, too. With the quality of cell phone video, and inexpensive or free editing sites and products such as the waterproof

GoPro, summer interns and high school students have produced some amazing content on a small budget.

Summit's Shark Diddy TV provides safety education featuring the SFAC's head lifeguard with mascot, Shark Diddy. Each segment is three to five minutes long and covers topics including how to properly fit life jackets, what whistles mean at a pool, never swim alone, and other standard rules that protect swimmers. The segments are "evergreen" and can be featured on regional television and in educational presentations in the community.

Also, Splash and Learn Sessions are held poolside featuring all types of education, including AED use, CPR Demonstrations, Lifeguard Drill Demos, Skin Cancer Screenings, and more.

As public pool operators, it's our responsibility to not only ensure the safety of our members and guests while at our site, but to provide them with the information that they need to be safe in and around the water whether it is at our facility or on vacation and at backyard pools. Backyard pool safety education for parents and turning parents into "water watchers" is the Summit Family Aquatic Center focus for the 2017 season.

@ For more information on free resources available to get these types of initiatives in your community or about getting involved with the New Jersey Recreation and Park Association Aquatic Section, contact Judith Leblein Josephs at [jjjosephs@cityofsummit.org](mailto:jjjosephs@cityofsummit.org).

## Swim School

On June 22, the Summit Family Aquatic Center will take part in the World's Largest Swimming Lesson, an international program of the World Waterpark Association for drowning prevention through swimming lessons that has set world records for the past several years. A free swim lesson is offered to all who come to the event to emphasize the importance of learning to swim.

Over 80 children participated in this free event last year and were exposed to the joy of swimming while having fun learning about safety in and around the water.

Information about the 2017 World's Largest Swim Lesson can be found at [waterparks.org](http://waterparks.org).