



Best Public/Nonprofit Indoor Family Aquatics Center

Cornerstone Aquatics Center,
West Hartford, Conn.

Buried treasure ... in Connecticut? That's right. In West Hartford, young divers hunt for this treasure in a tropical paradise twice a year, as part of the Cornerstone Aquatics Center Treasure Dive event hosted for kids around Easter and Halloween. The indoor pool is transformed into a tropical island, complete with floating decorations and staff in costumes. Children play games with "Dive Specialists" and go home with noncandy prizes — something parents can appreciate.

This event, along with several others hosted by the facility, brings together a community to "See how good the water can be," the central theme scripted across every brochure. To show patrons just how good the water



can be, the facility offers a balanced schedule that includes independent lap swimming during all hours of operation. Parents can drop off their children in a combo-class program that combines swim lessons and an hour of supervised crafts or games for the kids, while parents enjoy a

1½-hour workout and shower.

Like a buried treasure, Cornerstone considers its water "sacred" — maintaining the highest level of water quality. In addition, it makes sure the staff is of equal quality, and invests heavily in lifeguard and instructor training. — R.Y.

Best Practices

1 Pay attention to safety and cleanliness. Cornerstone treasures its water quality so much that it will even risk driving away patrons who don't respect the rules.

2 Consider professional management. The facility is operated by a private company, even though it's a municipality — and the results speak for themselves. For more than a decade, the facility has returned an average of \$100,000 per year back into the city coffers.

3 Cultivate a great staff. Operators find people who are passionate about aquatics. They then give them training and equipment to do the job well, and make their workplace a comfortable home away from home. It all results in low turnover.

Amenities & Programming

- ▲ Spa/ hot tub
- ▲ Diving well
- ▲ Diving board
- Learn-to-swim
- Lifesaving
- Water aerobics
- Water therapy
- Competitive swimming
- Scuba
- Adaptive Aquatics

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