

Saint Paul Sunnies Swim Team

Tzedek committee members have had many conversations about how best to do the work of repairing the world. We recognize that equity work can be overwhelming and that this can too often lead to cynicism and inaction, or to gestures that may be well intended but that fail to begin the work of structural change. This is why the work done by the Saint Paul aquatics team, located in the Rondo neighborhood, at the Jimmy Lee Rec Center and Oxford Pool, caught our attention.



We are impressed by the ways that St Paul Aquatics has addressed practices of marginalization and segregation resulting from a long history of exclusion of children of color from access to city pools and to water safety and swim programs. The decision made this past year by Mayor Carter and Saint Paul Aquatics, to make swim lessons free for all children, removed a significant barrier for access to water safety and to the joys of swimming. The Saint Paul Sunnies Developmental Swim Team was also created. This community swim team builds confidence, trust, and friendships as children learn athletic skills, water safety, and team spirit.

As we learned about this program, we also discovered that a number of children show up eager to participate but do not have swimsuits of their own. Our committee made the decision to give a gift card to the Aquatics Staff for the purpose of purchasing a variety of swim wear so that more children can participate in the swim programs with appropriate gear. This small gesture has resulted in many smiles and “thumbs up” when a child is handed a new suit. Some committee members also plan to attend the next Sunnies swim meet to show our support for this initiative. While this is just a small thread of repair, it connects us to our Rondo community in new ways.