

Dear Wittenberg-Birnamwood District Residents,

We are excited to share news of an important new partnership between the Wittenberg-Birnamwood School District and the local Wausau/Weston YMCA—a collaboration designed to enhance the safety, staffing, and sustainability of our local aquatic programs.

For many years, our staff has done an incredible job managing the Darwin E. Smith Aquatic Center, ensuring that our students and residents have access to a safe, high-quality swimming environment. As statewide safety regulations evolve and lifeguard certification standards become more demanding, operating an independent aquatic facility has become increasingly challenging, especially from a staffing standpoint. That's why we are thrilled to welcome the YMCA as our partner in continuing this important community service.

Recent updates from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the American Red Cross have introduced new certification and staffing requirements for aquatic facilities. While these standards are essential for maintaining the highest levels of safety, they can be difficult for smaller or independently operated facilities like ours to manage. Training, scheduling, and staffing all require a deep pool of qualified personnel—something that's not always easy to maintain locally.

The YMCA brings a wealth of experience and resources to this partnership. With eight Lifeguard Instructor Trainers (LGIs), one Lifeguard Instructor Trainer Educator (LGIT), and a team of more than 225 trained and certified lifeguards, the Y is exceptionally equipped to help us stay fully staffed and compliant with evolving safety regulations.

By leveraging the YMCA's existing network and training infrastructure, our district gains access to continuous staffing support, high-quality safety instruction, and a pipeline of trained lifeguards. Nothing else at the Darwin E. Smith Aquatic Center will change. This simply ensures that our aquatic programs remain open, safe, and accessible to everyone in the community—without the strain of managing certification and compliance independently.

This decision was not made lightly. The YMCA has a proven track record of successful partnerships with school districts and municipalities throughout our area. Through these collaborations, the Y has helped communities expand aquatic opportunities, extend pool hours, and provide comprehensive swim lessons and safety programs.

As we move forward, we will continue to keep our community informed about program updates, facility improvements, and expanded opportunities for swim instruction and recreation. If you have any additional questions regarding this new partnership, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Happy Thanksgiving!  
Garrett Rogowski