

National Council of Jewish Women  
Bergen County Section  
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**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO HELP SWIMMERS  
WITH MS GAIN STRENGTH AND FRIENDSHIP**

Men and women are needed to volunteer at “Swim-In,” a unique Aquatic Therapy program for people with Multiple Sclerosis. Volunteers push wheelchairs, assist clients in the locker room or serve as ‘swim buddies’ in the pool. The group meets on Wednesdays at noon from September to May at the Kaplen JCC on the Palisades, Tenafly.

Swim-In has been nationally recognized and is the only water-therapy program in the United States run by volunteers at no charge to participants. National Council of Jewish Women Bergen County Section supports the program and remains a significant source of its volunteers, and the MS Society provides financial and administrative assistance. Weekly sessions give people with MS improved body movement in the water and offer pleasant socialization for swimmers and volunteers.

Each swimmer must have approval of his/her physician and the Swim-In’s licensed physical therapist in order to participate. Swimmers are fitted with buoyancy belts and helped into the pool where they can walk in the water, swim and exercise with a volunteer. In addition, they interact with other persons with MS, form friendships and have a thoroughly enjoyable time on Wednesday afternoons and at other gatherings throughout the year, including an annual spring luncheon and summer pizza party.

Volunteers are responsible for the intricate logistics of bringing the group of swimmers in wheelchairs through all stages of the two-hour program. Each volunteer is assigned a role such as taking each swimmer in a wheelchair to and from the locker room to the pool area, helping swimmers dress and undress, or assisting in the water. Those who choose to work in the pool must be able to swim.

The program was founded in 1976 by Ruth Cowan, a licensed physical therapist and past president of NCJW BCS. From the beginning she was determined that it would be run to the highest professional standards. According to Ruth, “Individuals with MS can do many things in the water, thanks to the buoyancy it provides, that are impossible to do out of the water. The exercise makes them stronger and provides a feeling of elation that can last for hours.”

Participants agree. Swimmers say, “From the moment I entered the pool I realized I can walk unassisted” and “The love and care expressed by volunteers is wonderful.” The volunteers feel that it “adds a special meaning to my life” and is “the best afternoon of the week.”

“There is no question that both the social and exercise aspects of this special community service are rewarding on multiple levels to swimmers and volunteers alike,” say NCJW BCS Swim-In program co-chairs Ina Miller-Silverstein and Roxanne Reff. “The loving, caring bond that is formed between a

participant and his or her volunteer 'buddy' and the rest of the group is a very important factor in the success of the program.”

For more information or to arrange a visit to a Wednesday program, call Michael Silverstein at 201-692-1334 or email Leta Arad at leta\_arad@hotmail.com. *[Please note there is an underscore in this email address between 'leta' and 'arad'.]*

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The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

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**Photo caption:**

NCJW volunteers work with swimmers at “Swim-In,” a unique aqua-therapy program for people with Multiple Sclerosis. Additional volunteers are needed to assist the swimmers both in and out of the pool.

*Photo credit: NCJW*