

Newsroom

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Swim safely with advice from faculty expert in College of Public Health

APRIL 26, 2017



It's that time of year. The sun is shining, and the Georgia heat is beckoning you to the pool. The next time you're soaking in some rays and floating in the water, be sure to thank an environmental public health inspector.

Faculty expert and alumnus Chris Rustin ('04, '13), DrPH, REHS, has worked on data analysis with the Georgia Department of Public Health for years to determine the biggest health and safety risks associated with public pools. Rustin worked with his colleagues to prove that semi-public community pools, such as those in apartment complexes and neighborhoods, are most frequently cited as being out of compliance for state/local health and safety codes.

As former director of Environmental Health for the Georgia Department of Public Health, Rustin and colleagues were able to publish findings from a [cross-sectional study](#) of health inspection risk-factor data from a full year, and is using that data to help educate policy makers as well as the public. Research shows that the biggest risks for community pools include lack of disinfection chemicals, which kill microorganisms, improper pH, which can irritate the eyes and reduce efficacy of chlorine disinfection, and lack of barriers to prevent drownings.

Of the state's roughly 9,200 public, government-inspected pools, 55 percent are apartment, condominium and neighborhood pools. Of those 55 percent, Rustin looked at specific areas of concern including water chemistry, pH balance and pool barriers. Rustin's research showed 39 percent of waterborne diseases investigated in the state from 2001-2014 occurred in pools regulated by public health officials, including public and semi-public pools.

"When there is a small body of water with a lot of people in it, bacteria and disease can spread rapidly," he said. "Public health officials can put controls in place to quickly stop an outbreak for inspected pools."

Rustin noted that this research would not have served the public and legislatures as well had it not been published.

“So much of the research on public pools has gone entirely under the radar,” he said. “Public health officials analyze data collected to make decisions on protecting the public, but don’t always have time or resources to publish the data — they’re more focused on completing the inspections and taking action. By teaming up with academia, however, we can use these data to educate the public and make our communities safer for everyone.”

Before you dive into a pool this weekend, consider Rustin’s advice to stay safe:

- **Hygiene matters:** Everything on your body (and other swimmers’ bodies) from sunscreen to deodorant ends up in the pool. Shower before getting in the water to keep the water clean and allow the chlorine to do its job, and shower after swimming to protect your skin.
- **Keep it clear:** If the water looks cloudy, do not get in. You should be able to see to the bottom of a pool and ensure the drains covers are secured and in good condition.
- **Keep it safe:** Watch for exposed wires in pool lighting, glass on the deck and any other safety hazards.
- **Report it:** If you notice an unclean or unsafe pool, report the problem to management for your own safety and for those around you. It is management’s responsibility to keep the pool up to code.
- **Prepare for emergencies:** Verify that there is a lifeguard on duty. If not, locate the pool safety equipment before getting in the water, and use a hardwired pool phone to contact 911 with your exact location.
- **Never swallow pool water:** The germs, bacteria and chemicals in pool water get into your system and can make you ill.
- **Wear sunscreen:** Always protect yourself! Reapply often, and cover your entire body.

Rustin stresses to his students the importance of conducting research and sharing findings with the public.

“I’d like to highlight the fact that Georgia Southern offers an entire program in public health — from bachelor’s to doctorate,” said Rustin. “Anyone with interest in protecting their community and educating the public should really consider a job in this field. Not only do environmental public health inspectors keep your pools safe and clean, but they also inspect public lodging, waste disposal, restaurants and tattoo facilities. This field is so important.”

For more tips on how to stay healthy in a public pool,

visit <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/swimming/swimmers/steps-healthy-swimming.html>.

To learn more about the College of Public Health, visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/JPHCOPH.

Georgia Southern University, a public Carnegie Doctoral/Research University founded in 1906, offers 119 degree programs serving 20,673 students. Through eight colleges, the University offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs built on more than a century of academic achievement. Georgia Southern is recognized for its student-centered and hands-on approach to education. Visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu.

Double Eagle shares gift of music

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For some, picking up an instrument as a child is a hobby at best. For alumna and future Double Eagle Osibodu “Tito” Oluwatito (’14), though, playing her first baritone at the Salvation Army became a lifelong gift that kept giving.

Tito and her older brother, Michael, attended music camps at the Salvation Army every summer in her youth. She recalls growing up surrounded by others who loved music and ministry, and she was inspired by their programs.

“When I was younger, I longed to teach at the camps, and I did eventually start teaching there on staff until about two years ago,” said Tito. “I was a housekeeper and laundress at first and eventually moved up to an instructor, then camp counselor where I really fell in love with teaching and being involved with young people. I was given my first instrument, and it changed my life. I wanted to do the same for someone else.”

Tito’s passion for service and music carried over into her experiences at Georgia Southern, as she continued to volunteer with the Salvation Army, even recruiting her fellow music students to work with her there. She also joined sororities at the University and served her Department of Music.

“In addition to her professional drive to become a fine musician, she served the department on more than one fraternal service organization,” said Richard Mason, DMA, one of Tito’s favorite instructors. “She held offices in Tau Beta Sigma and Sigma Alpha Iota, both of which provide immeasurable service to the department. Off campus, Tito was extremely active in the Salvation Army. She frequently did mission trips abroad while maintaining her studies at home.”

Not only did Tito travel to Turks and Caicos and South Africa for music with the Salvation Army, but she also had the chance to share her love of music through a study abroad trip with the University. In 2011, Tito and other University music students played concerts in Budapest, Germany and Austria.

"That's the thing about music. It's universal. It's one of those things that transcends time and nationality. It unifies everyone, and I love that," said Tito.



Upon graduating from the University with a bachelors in music education in 2014, Tito provided youth ministry for the Savannah Salvation Army. After a year of working there, she was offered a graduate assistantship for the University's marching band and could not pass up the opportunity to further her education. She packed up and headed back to Statesboro.

"At first I did not want to go to graduate school at all, but two of my favorite professors [Dr. McKenzie](#) and [Dr. Dunham](#) sat me down and had a long conversation with me that inspired me to continue my education," she said. "They both pushed me to try to be the best musician I could be. Returning to the University was the best decision for me."

Tito currently works as the graduate assistant for the [Southern Pride Marching Band](#). She coordinates logistics for rehearsals, concerts and travel arrangements for the Band.

"Since her acceptance into the graduate program, Tito has been an important contributor to the overall success of our concert and athletic bands," said Mason. "She oversees several logistical concerns that are imperative in running such a large program. Simultaneously, she is gaining the knowledge, technical skill, and superior musicianship to become a fine band conductor.

I'm very proud of her accomplishments to date, and look forward to hearing about the great accomplishments that are still to come."

Tito will earn her Master's in music in May. After graduation, she plans to work as a music educator for middle school grades in hopes of sharing her passion to help others embrace the art.

"Music has given me my purpose, and now I'm able to give back," she said.

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