



ROD BRADLEY

After six days of splashing around aimlessly with three other students at the Norfolk Family YMCA, DeAnne Bradley, left, finally stayed afloat all by herself on Day Seven. Here, she talks with instructor Carly N. Schrader.

go!

Adult takes the plunge, begins swimming lessons

The plan: Abandon the perimeter of the pool this summer and actually use my swimsuit for swimming.

How did it go? Swimming is great. Coming up for air? Well, that's a different story. Let's just say I have good

lunac

BY DEANNE M. BRADLEY
THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

I ADORE MY blue two-piece swimsuit, packed all winter in my beach bag, ready to wear. You'd think I was a great swimmer. That's funny.

I spent one day in lessons when I was 6. Then there was that class in high school. Oh, how I loved my orange life jacket. In 2002, my best friend tried to drop some aquatic knowledge on me. He's still laughing at my swim cap.

This time, my college buddy Phedra Freeman joined me for lessons at the Norfolk Family YMCA. Eight lessons are \$63, \$33 for members.

Word about our adventure got out fast. "Lord, please watch over them," one

friend prayed via e-mail. "I already know DeAnne swims like a rock. They're going to need your presence to get them through this. They are like two pebbles on the bottom of the lake, so I ask that you do this small favor for me. Amen."

Carly N. Schrader, our instructor, has been teaching swim lessons for 4½ years and always urges new swimmers to start by getting comfortable in the water. Relaxation, repetition and a positive attitude are key, she said.

At least we had the attitude down pat. I found my swim cap and bought swim shoes for the occasion. I even ditched my two-piece swimsuit for a one-piece – you know, just in case I needed to be rescued.

On the first day we had to get rid of the footwear. They make kicking almost impossible. Too bad we couldn't exchange them for the goggles we forgot to buy.

Blowing bubbles in the water on the first day was easy. Full submersion on Day Three – not so much. I choked on chlorine, and I think my legs floated over my head. Remember what

I said about being rescued? We'll just leave it at that.

Kicking with the jumbo noodle and kickboard was a blast, but I'm not too coordinated. Adding the arms sent me into a flailing frenzy.

When I finally won that battle on Day Six, it was time to use a smaller noodle, a flotation device. I made the transition with only minor chlorine inhalation, but with just two lessons left, I wasn't convinced I would learn to swim.

Day Seven opened with a stroll to the deep end (5 feet) and Phedra's rendition of the baptismal tune "Take Me to the Water."

"Do you want to swim back without the noodle?" Carly asked.

By then, the only thing I really wanted was an appointment with my beautician, but I leaned forward, took a deep breath and splashed around.

Gasping, I floated to my feet. "I moved! I'm swimming – I'm swimming!"

"But wait. I forgot to come up for air."

■ Reach DeAnne Bradley at (757) 446-2358 or deanne.bradley@pilotonline.com.

details

Adult swim lessons

Norfolk Family YMCA

312 W. Bute St.
Fee: \$63; \$33, members
(757) 622-9622

Also available at

Effingham Family YMCA

1013 Effingham St.,
Portsmouth
(757) 399-5511

Great Bridge/Hickory Family YMCA

633 S. Battlefield Blvd.,
Chesapeake
(757) 546-9622

Indian River Family YMCA

5660 Indian River Road,
Virginia Beach
(757) 366-0488

Fees may vary by location. For schedules and additional locations, visit www.ymcashr.org.

tip

Swim caps are like potato chips: You can't have just one. If you really want to keep the chlorine at bay, it's best to protect your hair with two.