

PRESS RELEASE
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Lifesaver Lawrence stands down after 35 years of taking Rookies to the next level

A local lifesaving instructor is to step down after 35 years of teaching survival, rescue and swimming skills to the children of Kingswood.

Sixty-nine-year-old Lawrence Geraghty, who lives in Hanham, started swimming and lifesaving over 45 years ago, making the move towards teaching some ten years later.

The decision to step down comes at a turning point for Lawrence as he bids farewell to his latest group of Rookies, who have qualified from the course with distinction awards after five years with him.

The Rookie Lifeguard programme, which is the junior award scheme from The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) UK for 8-12-year-olds, has been running at Kingswood Active Lifestyle Centre for some time now, with classes also taking place at Bradley Stoke and Thornbury Lifestyle Centres.

In recognition of his many years of service, RLSS UK has awarded Lawrence with one of their highest honours – an "Honorary Life Member" status.

And while Lawrence's retirement from service marks the end of an era for the Rookies, the programme is set to continue following the appointment of Louise Towler.

Louise is a qualified Rookies Instructor, lifeguard and Duty Manager at Kingswood and is excited about taking over the helm for the Rookies. She has great plans to grow the provision and currently has vacancies for new Rookies to join. Sessions take place on Wednesday evenings between 4.00-6.00pm. Children are welcome to attend a free initial assessment, which can be organised by contacting the team at Kingswood Lifestyle Centre.

Reflecting on his decision to step down, Lawrence said: "It's an emotional wrench to stand down from the Rookies after such a long time. I was supposed to fully retire a few years ago, but somehow, I just couldn't do it! When I realised that my latest group were just about to qualify, I knew that the time was right for me to retire.

"It's been particularly sad to see this group move on as they've been with me for so long. They qualified from the course a few months ago but refused to leave, so we entered them for a higher award to keep them going. The Rookies can be like Marmite for some children, but this group have really picked it up and it was a pleasure to see them with their certificates at our last session.

"Some of the children have already asked if I'll come back, but I think now is the right time to pass the role onto someone else so I can spend some much-promised time with my wife."

Centre Manager at Kingswood Lifestyle Centre, Martyn Hinam, said: "The Rookie awards continue to provide children with a wide range of exciting and rewarding activities that help them to make friends and learn skills that could be essential to saving someone's life.

"Lawrence's contribution towards the Rookie sessions has helped to make a real difference in the local community and we're really sorry to see him step down. While his teaching days may be over,

we're sure this isn't the last we've seen of Lawrence in Kingswood and we hope that he continues to pop in while enjoying his well-earned retirement."

Kingswood Active Lifestyle Centre is one of five lifestyle centres and a dual-use sports centre operated across South Gloucestershire by the not for profit organisation Circadian Trust.

To find out more about the Centre, please visit: <https://www.activecentres.org/centres/kingswood/>

The Rookie Lifeguard programme is part of the National Plan for Teaching Swimming (NPTS) developed by the Amateur Swimming Association, for more information on the classes, please visit: <https://www.activecentres.org/swimming/Rookies/>

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Photo caption:

Photo one: The Kingswood Rookies with Louise Towler (far left) and Lawrence Geraghty (far right).

Photo two: Lawrence Geraghty handing over to Louise Towler.

Photo three: The Kingswood Rookies.

Notes to editor:

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About Circadian Trust

- Circadian Trust operates five leisure centre sites and a dual-use sports centre across South Gloucestershire in Bradley Stoke, Downend, Kingswood, Longwell Green, Thornbury and Yate and is a company and charity. Working in partnership with South Gloucestershire Council, the community strategy and overall shared philosophy is to contribute to the improved health, cultural and social wellbeing of the local community improving quality of life.
- Any profit made by the Trust is reinvested to improve facilities, equipment and services for its customers.
- For more information, visit: www.circadiantrust.org