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## Congo Swim Kicks Off

Submitted by Bobbie Dodson



Cora Kalukuta from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Suzanna Creasy, an eighth-grade graduate of Seven Hills School in Orinda, launched Congo Swim at the Lafayette-Orinda Presbyterian Church on Father's Day. Photo provided

The third annual Congo Swim is now accepting registrations. "Most people in our Lamorinda community are not aware of the humanitarian crisis in Congo," states Keris Dahlkamp, Congo Swim founder, who has swum the length of Lake Tahoe twice for this event.

"Our hope is to break the silence about this issue. It is estimated that at least 6 million people have died from war-related causes since 1996, half being children under the age of 5. Also, hundreds of thousands of women and children in eastern Congo have endured sexual violence. Funds raised will be distributed as grants by Global Fund for Women and Friends of the Congo to women and youth-led groups in Congo."

Participants are invited to swim, walk, run, ride, dance or donate. Activities suggested are to: learn to swim as a child or adult; walk around Lafayette Reservoir as many times as you can; ride your bike a certain distance once a week; time some minutes each day, or week while you dance; get your swim team to sponsor a Swimathon; organize a Congo Swim barbecue or party. "Choose a fun activity, involve your family and try to get sponsors so more people will be informed about the dire situation in Congo," Dahlkamp suggests. Donations are also accepted.

A 9-year old participant from last year shared, "I joined because people in Congo are suffering and I am here using an iPad made from valuable minerals that are supposed to benefit them, but don't." For the past 16 years, neighboring countries such as Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi have reaped most of the profits from mining such valuable minerals as coltran, tin and gold in Congo. Orindan Suzanna Creasey, an eighth grader, recently walked 22 miles around Lafayette Reservoir with her family, to mimic the 22 miles Dahlkamp swam in Lake Tahoe.

Oakland resident Cora Kalukuta says, "As a Congolese woman I'm participating because I desire for women in all of Congo to be empowered to nurture their families, work good jobs, have an education - to go anywhere in their country without being afraid."

The culmination will be on Aug. 23 when Dahlkamp will again be swimming at Lake Tahoe, with others invited to join him there. Closer to home a "Lake Merritt Walk for Congo" will take place. "If it were my wife or child being affected by violence in this way, I hope that those who could do something would do something," he says. "I invite everyone to join me in Congo Swim because we can do something that will make a difference."

To learn more and register go to [www.congoswim.org](http://www.congoswim.org) or phone (925) 812-2496.

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