

My name is Brittany Bledsoe. I am a Behavior Technician with Verbal Beginnings, where I work in ABA therapy supporting children on the autism spectrum.

Water Safety Awareness Month is deeply important to me, not just as a cause, but as my life's mission and part of my healing. Water can bring joy, peace, and family memories, but it can also be unpredictable and dangerous, especially for children. Drowning is one of the leading causes of death for young children, and for children with autism, the risk is even higher due to wandering behaviors, sensory attraction to water, and communication barriers. Many people don't realize how quickly and silently drowning can happen, and that is why awareness, education, and prevention are critical.

My passion for water safety comes from a heartbreaking personal loss. My son, Ace, was three years old and diagnosed with autism and was nonverbal, but he communicated through his smiles and hugs. Like many children with autism, Ace was naturally drawn to water. Water fascinated him. It made him happy. Unfortunately, that attraction is something many families in the autism community face every single day.

Ace tragically passed away after drowning in an apartment complex pool. That day changed my life forever. Losing a child is a pain that words cannot fully describe. It is a heartbreak that lives with me every moment. What makes it even harder is knowing how preventable drowning can be when proper safety measures, education, and awareness are in place. No parent should have to live with the silence, grief, and unanswered questions that come with losing a child to drowning.

Water Safety Awareness Month is about saving lives. It is about teaching families the importance of supervision, swim lessons, secure pool barriers, alarms, and learning CPR. It is about educating communities, apartment complexes, and organizations to take water safety seriously. It is also about making sure resources are accessible, especially for families of children with special needs, who often require specialized swim instruction and additional safety planning.

I share Ace's story not only to honor his beautiful life but to help protect other children. Ace's life matters. His story matters. If sharing our story helps even one family take extra precautions, enroll their child in swim lessons, or advocate for stronger safety measures, then Ace's legacy continues to live on through awareness and prevention.

Water safety is not just a seasonal conversation. It is a daily responsibility. During Water Safety Awareness Month, I encourage families, caregivers, and communities to educate themselves, check their safety measures, and have open conversations about drowning prevention. Together, we can create safer environments for our children and turn tragedy into purpose.

Ace will always be loved, always be remembered, and through this mission, his life continues to make a difference. My hope is that by spreading awareness, we can help ensure that more children get the chance to grow, laugh, and live the full lives they deserve