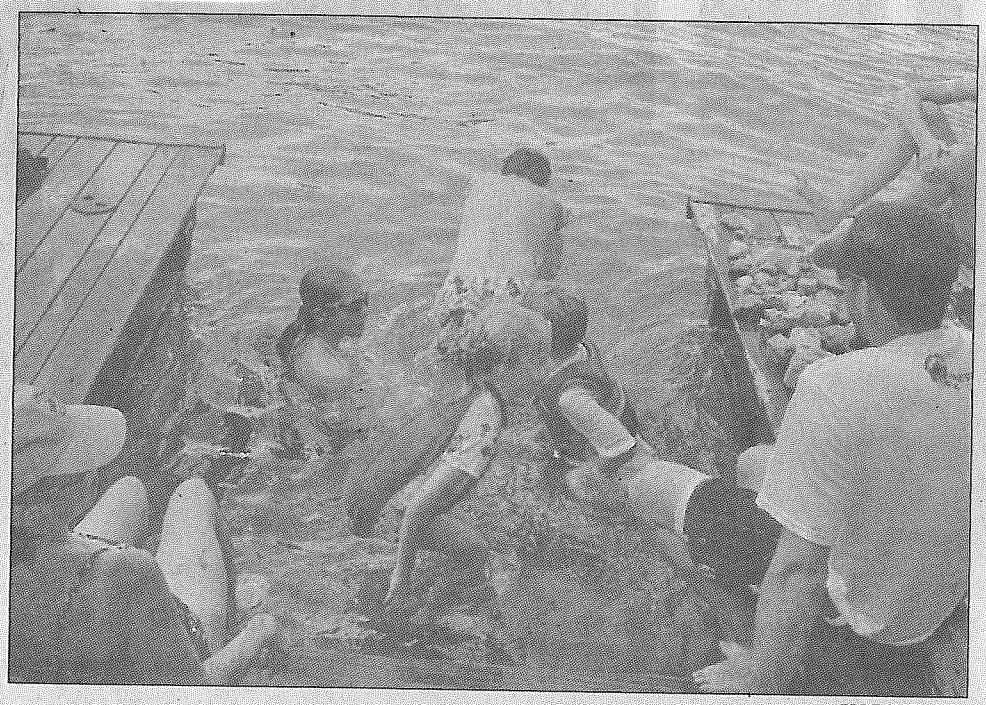
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FOR THE JOURNAL

Swimmers use one of the newly-developed retrofitted SwimEze docks. The product is the handiwork of local inventor, Jerry Schmid.

SwimEze dock retrofit introduced

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With lake levels near full pond, conditions are improved for summer water sports, and dock owners have many reasons to look forward to the upcoming boat and swim season on area lakes.

The winter months are an ideal time to consider options for enhancing access for swimming in lake waters.

An Upstate inventor and entrepreneur, Jerry Schmid has introduced a way to reinvent an existing dock, turning it into an integral part of this season's water fun.

"There are nearly 6,000 existing docks on the lakes in the Golden Corner," said Schmid, president of JSV Group. "Our initial SwimEze product, introduced two years ago, was set up to be integrated into a new dock. In 2009 we worked out the process to retrofit existing docks, which opens the door for a new group of consumers who already have a dock.

"If they want the ability to step in and out of the water via something easier than a ladder, we have the answer. Our first retrofit has been installed on Lake Hartwell, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive."

Development of the original SwimEze came in response to a real and personal need to provide water access for people with physical challenges in strength and ability. The challenge was met by integrating the technology of existing boatlift systems with a flight of folding stairs.

Schmid developed and patented the idea and to ensure soundness and safety collaborated with Clemson University's Engineering Department on the detailed mechanical design.

The result is a section of dock that descends and becomes a set of stairs leading to an underwater platform. The air-powered device operates entirely within the "footprint" of the dock and raises back up to become part of the dock's solid decking surface once again.

"From your dock, you enter the water down a set of broad, comfortable steps, just as you would enter the shallow end of a swimming pool," explained Schmid.

SwimEze can be viewed in action at www.swimeze.com