

NEWS

In the News

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Dive into Water Safety this Summer

Upcoming Holiday Weekend Reminds Parents to Watch out for Kids

By Maya Pai, Communications Associate

Wednesday, May 21, 2008 — Summer brings many fun festivities – backyard BBQ's, games at the ballpark and running through sprinklers in the front yard to beat the heat. Summer also marks the start of swim season. With many community and neighborhood pools opening on Memorial Day weekend, parents are reminded to ensure the safety of their children around the pool area.

At a press conference held at Turkey Thicket Recreation Center in Northeast DC, leaders and pool safety advocates came together to discuss prevention of accidental pool deaths and creating awareness around the preventable nature of drownings.

Nationally, drownings are second leading cause of unintentional deaths for children. The US Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued a report indicating the average number of drowning deaths for children younger than 5 in pools and spas has increased from a yearly average of 267 to 283.

"The concern is that we are seeing deaths go up, not down," said CPSC Acting Chairman Nancy Nord. "Drowning prevention is one of our highest priorities."



The best thing you can do to ensure your child's safety in the water is to make sure they know how to swim. You can find more information about the American Red Cross Learn-To-Swim courses from your local chapter.

(Photo Credit: Stock Photo/American Red Cross)

Florida Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman-Schultz has lobbied for mandating safer pool environments and says that parents should have many layers of protection in and around the pool. First, get the pool drains covered with anti-entrapment devices. Entrapment occurs when several hundred pounds of pressure pulls the child toward the drain. Second, have fences and barriers guarding the pool so that children cannot accidentally fall in. Lastly, have door alarms, so when a child steps out into the back yard, as a parent, you are alerted to it. She says that parental supervision is paramount, but cannot be guaranteed all the time, so these many "layers of protection are the key to drowning prevention."

"Use everything available to prevent the loss of life," said Nancy Baker, mother of Virginia Graeme Baker, a child who lost her life due to entrapment. Since this tragic accident, Baker has worked with the organization SafeKids Worldwide to tell her story and inform parents about the importance of having all protective measures in place to avoid unnecessary accidents.

Suzu DeFrancis, Chief Public Affairs Officer for the American Red Cross, closed by discussing the importance of knowing how to swim, and that the Red Cross teaches swimming to all ages and all levels of swimmers. DeFrancis also stressed that is imperative to also be trained in basic water safety, First Aid, CPR and AED to respond in the event of an emergency. All courses are offered through the Red Cross.

"I encourage all parents to contact their local American Red Cross chapter and ask about the many

services offered," said DeFrancis. "This is the first step to preventing aquatic accidents."

The American Red Cross, a leader in teaching pool safety, offers many courses that can prevent aquatic accidents. The Red Cross recommends starting your child swim classes between the ages of 4-6 years old, but even offers courses where infants as young as 6 months old can get their introduction to the water. Other aquatics safety courses include lifeguarding, basic water rescue and aquatic examiner courses. More information can be found by visiting RedCross.org.

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