

## **Drowning Prevention Network, April Pools Day, and Summer Splash-tacular Histories**

### *Network History*

The Seattle-King County Drowning Prevention Coalition was formed in 1991 followed by the formation of the Washington State Drowning Preventing Network (DPN) in 1995. Seattle-King County coalition leadership has been provided by Public Health-Seattle & King County with consultation provided by the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center, and the Washington State Department of Health. The DPN is currently led by members from agencies including: various State programs (Parks, EMS, and SAFE KIDS), the Washington Parks & Recreation Association, and Public Health – Seattle & King County. Members include numerous City and the County Parks departments, local marine patrol units, victim's groups, boating groups, the Washington State Insurance Council, the American Red Cross, US Coast Guard and many, many others.

### *Goals & Efforts*

Specific drowning prevention goals have included reducing submersions in open water situations such as lakes, rivers, Puget Sound, and in private and regulated swimming pools, spas and water parks. Efforts have also made to reduce submersions in bathtubs, toilets and buckets around the house.

The Coalition and Network continues other work on promoting water safety through examination of cases, networking on the various water safety issues, encouraging legislation such as: the children's lifejacket law, lifejacket loaner boards, prohibiting swimming in the Lake Washington Canal, media and other promotions, and the successful April Pools Day event.

### *April Pools Day History*

For 2006, this will be the thirteenth year of the April Pools Day statewide water safety event. When the Seattle-King County Drowning Prevention Coalition was formed, it looked at various water safety events around the country. In the Phoenix/Maricopa County area of Arizona, they were having on average, a child a day drown in mostly backyard pools. They decided to focus on private pool water safety and encourage CPR skills among residents. They had an event called "April Pool's Day" where they trained some 40,000 people at Sun Devil Stadium on CPR techniques. We knew from data that private pool drownings were more rare here and that many citizens did in fact already know CPR. We also knew that more comprehensive water safety education was needed here because of the multiple sources of risk such as salt water, lakes, rivers, backyard ponds, apartment and motel pools, and just all the water in the area.

The Coalition decided to have an annual April Pools Day event whereby families and others could go to the local pool and get safely prepared for our seasonal water related activities. It was decided that promotion of lifejacket usage would significantly improve water safety as would swim lessons, good supervision, and reduction of alcohol use around the water. We designed April Pools Day to include a free swim so that community members can get more familiar with their local aquatic facilities. It also includes the opportunity to have the family lifejackets checked for fit and function and even allow people to put the jackets on and jump in the water so they are more comfortable using them. Each individual pool designs the program that best fits

their need but usually includes water safety demonstrations and “hands on” practice such as, reach assists, use of improvised rescue equipment, and wearing a lifejacket in a small craft in the pool.

A lifejacket is given away at each pool courtesy of Mustang Survival. Children’s Hospital and Regional Medical Center has provided materials and support for this event. The Washington Recreation and Parks Association Aquatic Section and many other key partners have been very helpful with overall coordination of the event by working with the various parks departments, and community and private pools. While King County and Seattle Parks have been very supportive of this event and participate in the annual April Pools Day press event, this event has grown to be a statewide effort. The King County based press event brings attention to April Pools Day itself, promotes water safety, and provides recognition for water safety hero’s and, we are excited about other media preparations which have begun in other regions of the state.

### *Summer Splash-tacular History*

In an effort to educate more children and families with the water safety messages of April Pools Day, in 2006 the first Summer Splash-tacular events were organized. The goal of this event is similar of April Pools Day, but will take place in outdoor facilities during the summer.

If your agency, facility, or staff would like to be involved with April Pools Day or Summer Splash-tacular you may contact:

Sarah Kane, APD & SS Committee Chair  
Events and Marketing Supervisor  
City of Lynnwood  
425-744-6447  
[skane@ci.lynnwood.wa.us](mailto:skane@ci.lynnwood.wa.us)

