

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

Washington State Drowning Prevention 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 is led by Public Health-Seattle & King County with consultation from the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center, Seattle Children's Hospital and the Washington State Department of Health. The DPN is led by Seattle Children's Hospital, Public Health – Seattle & King County, Washington State Department of Health Emergency Medical Services, Safe Kids Washington and Washington State Parks Boating Program. Members include numerous city and the county parks departments, marine patrol units, family members, boating groups, YMCA, the American Red Cross, US Coast Guard and many, many others.

Goals & Efforts

Specific drowning prevention goals include 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 educate families about water risks and prevention 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 water safety issues, media, school programs and promoting policies related to issues such as the children's lifejacket law, lifejacket loaner boards, prohibiting swimming in the Lake Washington Canal and reinstating lifeguards at state parks. April Pools Day and Summer Splash-tacular are annual projects of the DPN.

April Pools Day History

April Pools Day, based on Arizona's Phoenix/Maricopa County "April Pool's Day," began in 1993 by the Seattle-King County Drowning Prevention Coalition. The Coalition decided to have an annual April Pools Day event where families and community members could go to their local pool and get safely prepared for our seasonal water related activities. These events focused on using life jacket, taking swim lessons, providing good supervision, and reducing alcohol use around the water as ways to improve water safety. April Pools Day was designed 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 allow people to put the jackets on and jump in the water so they are more comfortable using them. April Pool's day is now a statewide event with each individual pool designing the program that best fits their needs. Programs often include 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.

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 to April Pools Day, but takes place in outdoor facilities during the summer.

The April Pools Day and Summer Splash-tacular Partnership

Seattle Children's Hospital hosts the website and serves on the coordinating team. The Washington Recreation and Parks Association Aquatic Section helps with overall coordination of the event by working with the various parks departments, and community and private pools. Public Health Seattle & King County coordinates press conferences and press releases during most years. 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 heros. Many other communities also have media events in other regions of the state. Most important are the pools that host these events. There are 2,500-5,000 family members that benefit from the fun and learnings at April Pools Day and Summer Splash-tacular every year.

For More Information

For more information, visit www.seattlechildrens.org/dp-apd.