

American Red Cross Offers Lifesaving Water Safety Advice and Presentations: “Have Fun This Summer Without Taking a Vacation From Safety”

Summer is a wonderful time of year; Central Georgia children and parents look forward to outdoor activities at the pool, lake and beach. Yet accidents can happen if families take a vacation from safety. The good news is that most water tragedies can be prevented, if everyone remembers the basic rules of water safety.

Volunteers from the Central Georgia Chapter in Macon and the Oconee Valley American Red Cross Service Center in Milledgeville are available to do thirty minute youth water safety presentations to your camp or bible school (no water needed). These are offered free of charge, on a first come, first served basis. Please call our office to schedule a safety presentation.

“The American Red Cross reminds everyone to have fun this summer without taking a vacation from safety,” says Sister Geraldine Yerg – Central Georgia Chapter, Health and Safety Director. “These tips will help keep everyone healthy and safe in or around the water”:

- **Learn to swim and swim well.** One of the best things anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is learn to swim. No one, including adults, should ever swim alone. Adults should practice “reach supervision” which means to be within arm’s length of a child in case an emergency occurs.
- **Outfit everyone with the proper gear.** Kids – and even adults – who are not strong swimmers or who appear to rely on inflatable toys for safety should use U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) whenever they are in or around the water. “This lifesaving lightweight plastic equipment when used properly can help save lives,” says Sister Geraldine. Everyone, including strong swimmers, should use an approved PFD when boating. Each person should have the appropriate personal flotation device for his or her weight and size, which is found clearly marked inside the label near the Coast Guard stamp. “A great idea is to make a family day out of learning the rules of water safety and shopping for durable safety equipment together at a local pool supply store or mass distributor,” Yerg suggests.
- **Always keep basic lifesaving equipment by the residential pool and know how to use it.** A first aid kit, cordless phone, phone list with emergency contact information, a reaching pole and a ring buoy with a nylon line attached are recommended. First aid kits should contain plastic face shields, which can help prevent disease transmission. Cordless phones allow you to make that 911 call and to receive calls without leaving the area.

“Plastic makes the ring buoy so light even a child can save a life if the need

arises,” points out Sister Geraldine. “These items coupled with a pool emergency action plan—similar to a fire drill—help the whole family breathe a little easier.” In addition, the Red Cross recommends that pools be surrounded on all sides by a fence that is at least 4 feet high. It should not provide any footholds, which would allow a child to climb over or spacing to climb through. The fence should have a self-closing, self-locking gate that is locked when the pool is not in use.

- **Pack a “safety” bag for a day at the beach or lake.** “The properly packed safety bag will help ensure a fun day in which everyone comes home safe and sound.” Water-proof sunscreen with an SPF 15 or higher, water shoes to keep feet safe from the heat and sharp objects on land and plenty of water are musts. All containers should be plastic to prevent injuries from breaking glass. Also, a hat and sunglasses keep eyes safe from dangerous UV rays.
- **Learn Red Cross first aid and CPR.** “While the above tips can help prevent emergencies, it is important to know what to do if a situation arises,” says Lamsma. And all caregivers, including grandparents, older siblings and babysitters should have these lifesaving skills.

For more information on staying safe in and around the water contact Sister Geraldine Yerg at the Central Georgia Chapter American Red Cross at (478) 743-8671 or Ed Smith at the Oconee Valley American Red Cross Service Center at (478) 452-2675.

Governed by volunteers and supported by community donations, the American Red Cross is a nationwide network of local community supporters -- volunteers, blood donors, and financial donors -- organized into nearly 1,000 chapters, Blood Services regions and field units dedicated to saving lives and helping people prevent, prepare for and respond to emergencies. Led by 1.2 million volunteers and 36,000 employees, the Red Cross annually mobilizes relief to families affected by more than 67,000 disasters, trains nearly 12 million people in lifesaving skills and exchanges more than a million emergency messages for U.S. military service personnel and their families. The Red Cross is the largest supplier of blood and blood products to more than 3,000 hospitals across the nation and also assists victims of international disasters and conflicts throughout the world.

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