



Media Contact:
Ania Czarnecka
713-869-0707
aczarnecka@wardcc.com

Association Contact:
Andy Teas
713-595-0300
ateas@haaonline.org

May Day! May Day! Event launches May as Water Safety Month in Texas

HOUSTON – (May 23, 2019) – A drowning can happen quickly and quietly, anywhere to anyone. The Houston Apartment Association (HAA) along with Safe Kids Greater Houston Water Safety team members and local experts came together to launch May as Water Safety Month in Texas, dedicated to providing water safety education and drowning prevention information to parents and children.

“Drowning is preventable, and we have seen a dramatic reduction in the number of apartment drownings in recent years, but we remain proactive,” said Starla Turnbo, Houston Apartment Association’s president. “With more than one million Houstonians living in apartments, HAA focuses on swimming lessons for children and educating parents about the importance of proper supervision. It only takes minutes to drown, so we urge the parents to be vigilant.”

Drowning remains among the top five causes of unintentional death from birth to 54 years old and it is the leading cause of unintentional injury death for children ages one to four. The American Academy of Pediatrics has recently called for swim lessons for all children between those ages. In the greater Houston area, 23 children drowned in backyard and community pools, open bodies of water, and even bathtubs and buckets in their homes in 2018. In partnership with YMCA, HAA also offers the Safe Around Water program to provide swim lessons to children in apartment communities. Over the past nine years, the program has taught approximately 9,000 children living in apartment communities how to swim, float and survive in the water. This year, we estimate that another 1,000 children will receive swimming lessons at more than 80 apartment communities free of charge, thanks to the generosity of our member communities.

As summer approaches it is important to remember the following water safety tips:

- Never leave children near water without adult supervision
- Do not allow children to swim alone
- Children should always be within an arm’s distance of a supervising adult in the water
- Assign an adult as “water watcher” – the person committed to supervising the pool area
- Paddling pools are just as dangerous - a single inch of water covering a child’s mouth and nose can cause drowning
- Enroll children in swim lessons
- Learn CPR
- Always secure access to swimming pools. All apartment pools have fences and self-closing and latching gates preventing children from entering the pool area unattended – notify management immediately if they are not in a working order
- Learn how to use the safety devices – all apartment pools are equipped devices intended to prevent death or injury. These items include drain covers, a shepherd’s hook and a reaching pole, a throwing rope, and a ring buoy. If any of these devices are missing or in disrepair, please notify management immediately.

- Be a good neighbor, if you see any unattended children at the community pool, urge them to leave the pool area and report the incident to the manager immediately.

91 children died in Texas last year alone, 30% of those were in open bodies of water. During the May Day! May Day! event, 91 swimsuits, in different sizes (to reflect ages of the victims) were displayed to represent each of those young promising lives lost.

About the Houston Apartment Association:

The Houston Apartment Association is a professional trade association that serves individuals and businesses involved in the ownership, construction, management, maintenance and operation of apartments and other rental dwellings in the Houston area. See www.haaonline.org for more information.

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