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Arizona sees progress on prevention of child drownings

PHOENIX, Ariz. (August 27, 2007) – As Drowning Impact Awareness Month, the purple ribbon campaign to prevent child drownings in the month of August, draws to a close, 2006 data is expected to show that Maricopa County had the lowest rate of child drowning deaths in more than twenty years.

“Every drowning is preventable, and one is really too many,” comments Bob Meyer, CEO of Phoenix Children’s Hospital. “At the same time, we should note the progress we’ve made on this issue, especially when you consider Arizona’s rapid growth rate. We must continue with an aggressive fight to keep Arizona children safe.”

In 1986, 34 children drowned in Maricopa County, and the drowning death rate reached a record 23.8 children per 100,000. The most recent data available shows that 15 children drowned in 2005 in Maricopa County, bringing the rate per 100,000 children down to 5.3, the lowest in twenty years. Data from 2006 is expected next month, and the total number of fatalities was approximated at ten, altogether. None of those fatalities occurred in the months of June, July, or August.

The decrease in child drownings is likely due to a combination of factors, including aggressive awareness and prevention programs, such as “Drowning Impact Awareness Month” and “Water Safety Day,” both of which are coordinated by Water Watchers at Phoenix Children’s Hospital. A strong evidence-based focus on the role of barriers in drowning prevention is also a significant factor, as is Arizona’s unified drowning prevention community. In recent years, many Arizona programs have drawn nationwide interest, as other states look for ways to combat child drowning tragedies.

Vigilance is always urged, especially during summer holidays, such as Labor Day. Families are encouraged to practice the ABC’s of Water Safety this holiday weekend:

- **Adults** should have eye to eye contact with children around all forms of water. Children should *never* have access to a swimming pool without an adult supervising them at all times.
- **Barriers** between children and water can save a life. In 95 percent of swimming pool incidents reviewed by the Arizona Child Fatality Review team, a properly locked and maintained fence could have prevented tragedy.
- **Classes** in CPR for adults and swimming lessons for children at the appropriate age will help everyone to know what to do in an emergency.

Phoenix Children’s Hospital is Arizona’s leader in pediatric care and is one of the 10 largest free-standing children’s hospitals in the nation. The most comprehensive array of pediatric specialists in the State practice at this one organization. The outstanding clinical expertise, as well as high patient volume, and an unwavering commitment to caring only for children, all contribute to Children’s leadership position. For information about Phoenix Children’s, visit the Hospital’s website at www.phoenixchildrens.com.

