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June 11, 2007

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Keep your eye on the kids – prevent drowning

Most drowning incidents in children occur in residential pools. However, young children can drown in less than two inches of water. In fact, each year children drown in bathtubs, buckets, coolers, ponds, ditches, fountains, hot tubs, toilets, pet water bowls and wading pools.

Pool submersions involving children happen quickly and silently, with most child drowning victims missing from sight for less than five minutes. Most drowning deaths occur when the parent or caregiver gets distracted by the telephone, doorbell or household chores.

Children can drown in a matter of seconds. So if a child is missing, always check the water first. Childhood drowning can be prevented. Here are some tips from the Pinellas County Health Department for safety around the home:

- An adult must always supervise children playing in and around water.
- Never put a young child in charge of watching a younger sibling or playmate.
- Empty water buckets after each use and store them upside-down and out of a child's reach.
- Keep toilet seats down and consider using a lock or toilet clip to prevent toddlers from opening the toilet.

Fences, barriers and alarms add an extra layer of protection around the pool.

- Secure safety covers and barriers to prevent children from gaining access to pools, spas or hot tubs when not in use.
- Never disable an alarm or prop open the gate to a pool fence or barrier.
- Learn to swim and teach your children how to swim.
- Flotation devices and swimming lessons are NOT a substitute for adult supervision.
- Remove toys from in and around the pool area, especially riding toys.

Remember, adult supervision is the most effective strategy for drowning prevention. You can prevent childhood drowning – keep an eye on the kids this summer.

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