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TRIPLE DIGITS, STAY-CATIONS ADD UP TO INCREASED DROWNING RISK

"Learn from History," on Memorial Weekend, Urges Mother of Drowning Victim

Phoenix, Ariz. (May 20, 2009) Record-breaking heat hit the Valley of the Sun this month, but most Arizonans will not escape to cooler destinations. Instead, "Stay-cations" will be the norm, with most families saving money by staying home by backyard pools.

That was the plan for three year old Weston Letter's family, on Memorial weekend in 1998. "My twin daughters were just two months old," says Druann, Weston's mother, "and friends were coming over for a bar-b-que." While the family prepared for guests, Weston fell into the family's backyard pool and drowned.

"We were stunned," says Druann. "We were very safety conscious, and never thought it would happen to us. I still can't believe he's gone."

A two year old boy drowned in a Mesa backyard pool on Tuesday night, bringing the total number of child drowning fatalities to five. Arizona is number two in the nation for child drownings, behind Florida. Sixteen children drowned in 2008, in Maricopa County alone.

The risk of child drownings increases significantly on summer holiday weekends, such as Memorial Day. Prior incidents in Maricopa County on Memorial weekend include:

- On Memorial weekend in 2006, two Valley girls, ages two and four, were pulled from swimming pools on the same day. One was reported in critical condition, and the other was expected to recover.
- On Memorial weekend 2005, a two year old boy drowned in his family's backyard pool in Mesa.
- On Memorial weekend, 2004, a nine year old boy drowned in the Verde River, and a four year old girl drowned in an unfenced pool in Glendale.

Stay-cations poolside can be safe and fun, if families practice the ABC's of Water Safety, by ensuring that **adults** should have eye to eye contact with children around water, restricting access to the water with **barriers** like pool fences, and taking **classes** in CPR for adults, and swimming lessons for children at the appropriate age.

About Phoenix Children's Hospital

Phoenix Children's Hospital is Arizona's only licensed children's hospital, providing world-class care in more than 40 pediatric specialties to our state's sickest kids. Though Phoenix Children's is one of the ten largest freestanding children's hospitals in the country, rapid population growth in Arizona means the Hospital must grow as well. Phoenix Children's recently announced a \$588 million expansion plan to bring its special brand of family-centered care to even more patients and families. The plan includes a significant upgrade of the Hospital's current campus, an aggressive physician recruitment effort, and new satellite centers in high growth areas of the Valley. For more information, visit the Hospital's Web site at www.phoenixchildrens.com.