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ECONOMIC CRISIS MAKES VOLUNTEERS SCARCE

“Water Safety Day” Recruitment Forty Percent Below Normal Total

Phoenix, Ariz. (February 12, 2009) The Valley of the Sun is known for its strong spirit of volunteerism, especially when it comes to Phoenix Children’s Hospital. More than 12,000 volunteer hours were provided to the hospital in 2008 alone.

But the economic crisis has slashed volunteer availability, at a time when the risk of drownings is expected to increase. Tighter household budgets will result in fewer fences around pools, less-than-ideal childcare arrangements, and fewer vacations away from home. Sixteen children drowned in Maricopa County in 2008, an increase from the previous year.

The economy is blamed for a sharp reduction in volunteer support to date for Valley Toyota Dealer’s Tenth Annual Water Safety Day, also presented by SRP Safety Connection. **Volunteer recruitment is forty percent behind last year’s February total.**

Water Safety Day has come to be known as “the Valley’s Official Kickoff to Swimming Season,” and will be on **Tuesday, March 24, 2009**, at **Mesa Community College**, 1833 W. Southern, **from 9 am to 1:30 pm**. More than 1200 first graders will attend, to learn critical drowning prevention lessons through hands-on activities. The event is organized by Water Watchers at Phoenix Children’s Hospital and has grown in reputation and community support to become well known throughout the United States.

Hundreds of volunteer positions are available, with some starting as early as 5 am, including:

- **Tour guides** to direct teachers and parents through the activities
- **Setup, cleanup, and food service** positions
- **Assistants** to help presenters at various activities

Shifts are available throughout the day, and many bilingual Spanish speaking volunteers are needed. For more information, go to <http://www.phoenixchildrens.com/calendar-of-events/water-safety-day.html>.

About Water Watchers at Phoenix Children’s Hospital

Water Watchers at Phoenix Children’s Hospital has been educating the community about drowning prevention for more than ten years. The group was founded in honor of Weston Letter, who drowned in 1998. The award-winning Water Watchers program brings efforts like Water Safety Day and Drowning Impact Awareness Month to the community, and uses the latest data and studies in injury prevention to create research-proven strategies for public health. For more information, visit www.phoenixchildrens.com or call 602-546-1712.