



**ORANGE COUNTY TASK FORCE
ON DROWNING PREVENTION**

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Kristina Hamm
(949) 430-8344

**Drowning Prevention Task Force Meets to Develop
Recommendations, Campaign Strategy**

*Outcome of Expert Panel Discussion to Promote Public Awareness, Enhance Programs to
Reduce Drowning Incidents and Fatalities*

Santa Ana, Calif. – A drowning prevention task force was empaneled Monday (Aug.3) to develop recommendations on methods and strategies to reduce drowning incidents and fatalities in Orange County. The 24-member task force includes the heads of county-wide public health, public safety, government, non-profit organizations, parents of victims, and Olympic medal-winning swimmers.

“This is as much an issue of public health as it is an issue of public awareness,” said Orange County Task Force Chair and Tustin Councilmember Al Murray. “This session will lead to development of a strategic framework on how we can together reduce the unintentional injury and death associated with drowning.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control, drowning is the number one cause of fatalities among children up to four years of age. To date in 2015, 49 drowning calls have been received, and 22 involved children four years of age or younger; four were fatalities. Drowning reports county-wide that involve young children, including fatal and non-fatal incidents, are nearly 45 percent of all those reported, according to the Orange County Fire Authority (OCFA).

“Nearly all drowning death is preventable,” said Orange County Task Force Vice Chair and Blue Buoy Swim School Owner Johnny Johnson. “And while young children are especially at risk, it’s important to understand that drowning impacts all age groups, including older adults.”

In 2015, according to OCFA data, 10 drowning incidents involved victims 50 years of age or older, seven of those were fatal. Of all drowning incidents reported county-wide, 49 in 2015, 18 were fatal.

The task force engaged in a facilitated discussion that covered a review of current drowning prevention efforts, methods on increasing public awareness, and ways in which groups can marshal resources into implementation strategies and a campaign to prevent drowning.

Task Force leadership was also chosen by the group. Murray will serve as chair, Johnson as vice chair, along with vice chairs; Olympic swimmers Janet Evans and Aaron Peirsol, and Julie Lopiccolo, Jasper Ray Foundation president and drowning victim’s mother. OCFA’s Community Relations and Education Supervisor Kristina Hamm will serve as Task Force secretary.

The Orange County Task Force on Drowning Prevention will develop a report and recommendations scheduled for release in two to three weeks.

-30-

Attachments:

Task Force Leadership Pics/Bios

Orange County Task Force on Drowning Prevention Member List

Leadership Bios - Orange County Task Force on Drowning Prevention

Al Murray Chair



Al Murray was elected to the Tustin City Council in November of 2010. He is the Immediate-Past Chairman of the Orange County Fire Authority Board of Directors, where his leadership helped create OCFA's largest drowning prevention outreach effort in the organization's history. A past law enforcement professional and police lieutenant with 35 years of experience, he is the recipient of the Irvine Police Department's highest honor, the Medal of Valor.

Johnny Johnson Vice Chair



For more than 50 years, Johnny Johnson has been a legend in the world of swimming and water safety. He is the owner of Blue Buoy Swim School in Tustin and has taught thousands of children (and multiple Olympians) to swim. He and his wife Cindy founded the Safer 3 Drowning Prevention Program and established the Swim for Life Foundation (now Safer 3 Water Safety Foundation). They are both members of the Board of Directors of the National Drowning Prevention Alliance, Johnny as a founding Board Member and a past president.

Janet Evans Vice Chair



Despite her small size and unorthodox windmill stroke, Janet Evans was a natural-born swimmer who was swimming laps at the age of two. By the end of her storied career, she was considered to be the greatest female distance swimmer of all time. On her path to earning that accolade, Evans earned four individual Olympic gold medals and one silver medal, won seventeen international titles and forty-five US National titles, and broke seven world records, many of which stood for two decades. Janet is a true legend in her sport as well as in women's sports.

Leadership Bios - Orange County Task Force on Drowning Prevention

Julie Lopiccolo

Vice Chair



Julie M. Lopiccolo, Esq. is the Co-Founder and President of the Jasper Ray Foundation for Drowning Prevention and Child Safety. Julie and her husband Jonathan are the parents of Jasper St. Clair a beautiful, healthy and smart 21 month old boy who lost his life to drowning when his babysitter took him without permission to a home with an ungated pool. Jasper was momentarily left unsupervised and found his way outside to the pool where he drowned.

Aaron Peirsol

Vice Chair



Aaron Peirsol is an American former competition swimmer and backstroke specialist and a world champion and world record-holder. He is a three-time Olympian and seven-time Olympic medalist. As a member of the U.S. national team, he holds the world record in the men's 4×100-meter medley relay (long course). He holds the individual world records in the 100-meter and 200-meter backstroke (long course). He currently serves as a Newport Beach Lifeguard.

Dr. Paul Lubinsky

Vice Chair



Dr. Lubinsky serves as associate director of the pediatric intensive care unit (PICU) at CHOC Children's and as medical director of CHOC Children's Specialists. He specializes in pediatric critical care with expertise in the treatment of respiratory failure, traumatic brain injury, and cardiac intensive care. Throughout his highly-regarded career, Dr. Lubinsky has been a passionate advocate of injury prevention in children and he has lobbied vigorously for community awareness and prevention of drowning.

Kristina Hamm

Secretary



Kristina Hamm serves as OCFA's supervisor for community relations and education. In 2015, she organized the largest drowning prevention campaign in the organization's history. This involved more than 65 community-based drowning prevention events, 300 free swim lessons in Santa Ana, and educational material translated into five languages.

Orange County Task Force on Drowning Prevention

1. **Mark Refowitz**, Director, Orange County Health Care Agency
2. **Mike Ryan**, Director, Orange County Social Services
3. **David Souleles**, Public Health Director, Orange County Health Care Agency
4. **Dr. Eric Handler**, Health Officer, Orange County Health Care Agency
5. **Eldon Baber** – The Raise Foundation
6. **Rob Williams**, Newport Beach Lifeguard Chief (Delegate - **Aaron Peirsol**, Newport Beach Lifeguard, Olympic Swimmer)
7. **Joe Bailey**, Marine Chief, Seal Beach Lifeguards
8. **Sandra Hutchens**, Orange County Sheriff
9. **Randy Bruegman**, President, OC Fire Chiefs Association
10. **Al Murray**, Immediate-Past Chair, OCFA Board of Directors
11. **Jeff Bowman**, Fire Chief, Orange County Fire Authority
12. **Todd Spitzer**, Chair, OC Board of Supervisors
13. **Jeff Lalloway**, Chair, Orange County Transportation Authority
14. **Jenni Worsham**, President elect for CPRS Aquatics
15. **Daniel S. Llorens**, OC Police Chiefs Association
16. **Julie Lopiccolo**, President, Jasper Ray Foundation
17. **Johnny Johnson**, President, Safer 3 Foundation
18. **Janet Evans**, Olympic Swimmer
19. **Jason Lezak**, Olympic Swimmer
20. **Dr. Paul Lubinsky**, Medical Director, CHOC Children's Specialists.
21. **Paul Melby**, President, Orange Empire Building Officials Association
22. **Dr. Sudeep Kukreja**, President, OC Medical Association
23. **Doug Davert**, Chair, OCFA Foundation
24. **Christina Altmayer**, Children and Families Commission of Orange County (Delegate - **Alyce Mastrianni**, Health Policy and Program Director, Children and Families Commission of Orange County)