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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, May 1, 2026

MAY IS WATER SAFETY MONTH!



LINCROFT — May is here and brings with it many wonderful things – warmer weather, the unofficial kick off to the summer season, and National Water Safety Month. As Monmouth County’s park and recreation agency, the Monmouth County Park System is dedicated to keeping county residents and visitors safe as they enjoy the water this summer and throughout the year.

“As we head into the warmer months, we’re reminding everyone that water safety has to come first, whether you’re at the shore, a lake, or a backyard pool. Too many accidents happen because people overestimate their swimming ability or underestimate conditions,” said Monmouth County Commissioner Director Thomas A. Arnone. “That’s why we’re proud of the programs offered by the Monmouth County Park System, which give residents of all ages the chance to build real skills and confidence in the water. I encourage families to take advantage of these lessons and to make safety part of every outing.”

One of the best ways to be safe around water is by learning how to swim. For over three decades the Park System has offered swim lessons. From introducing babies and toddlers to the water, to helping older children work on stroke refinement, these classes meet students at their skill and developmental level while emphasizing basic water safety. Park System swim lessons are listed in the summer edition of the ***Parks & Programs Guide***, released on Friday, May 8, with registration starting at 8 a.m. on Wednesday, May 13. Be sure to get a jump on safety this summer by signing up your child for swim lessons.

No matter your skill level, the safest place to swim is under the watch of a lifeguard! During the summer months, the Park System offers several locations to do just that – the pools at the Fort Monmouth Recreation Area, Tinton Falls, and Big Brook Park, Marlboro, and the guarded beach at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park, Long Branch, where swimming is permitted when lifeguards are on duty. Weather and conditions permitting, lifeguards at Seven Presidents Oceanfront Park are on duty weekends starting Memorial Day Weekend and daily from June 13 through Labor Day.

Remember even with lifeguards on duty, parents should always keep a close eye on their children. Please visit www.MonmouthCountyParks.com for pool dates and times, and fees for all three locations. Swimming is only permitted in these designated locations and only when lifeguards are on duty.

“Our Park System staff work every day to make sure visitors can enjoy our parks safely, whether they’re swimming, paddling, or casting a line. We’re grateful for their dedication, especially during the busy summer season,” said Monmouth County Commissioner Ross F. Licitra. “With so many opportunities to enjoy the water throughout Monmouth County, we encourage everyone to plan ahead, follow posted guidelines, and make the most of a safe and memorable summer.”

In the warmer months, the Park System offers row boats, canoe and kayak rentals at the Manasquan Reservoir in Howell and Turkey Swamp Park in Freehold, and canoes on select weekends at Thompson Park in Lincroft. (Please visit www.MonmouthCountyParks.com for details including dates, times and fees.) All rentals include use of a U.S. Coast Guard-approved lifejacket. Both the Manasquan Reservoir and Turkey Swamp Park also have lifejackets available to rent for those who bring their own boats. Whether in the parks or elsewhere, always use a U.S. Coast Guard-approved lifejacket for boating and water sports. No matter what the activity, it’s important to observe safety signs and water conditions when near a pool or natural body of water. Parents are encouraged to talk about water safety before their visit.

Those who enjoy being on the water may be interested in the Park System’s ***Boat America*** class. Offered several times a year, this comprehensive one-day course covers navigation rules and regulations, state-specific laws, and what to do during an emergency. The class culminates in a test to earn the New Jersey

State Police Certificate for power watercraft operators and is the perfect preparation for a safe and enjoyable outing.

Even those who aren't interested in boating should be ready to respond if a water-based emergency arises. The first thing to know is, "Reach, Throw, Don't Go." This simple phrase covers the best way to help someone if they're drowning - throw them something to grab onto, ideally a rescue device, rather than jump in unless specifically trained. Then call for help and, once they're out of the water, check for signs of breathing. If needed, perform CPR.

The Park System has those wanting to learn the basics or brush up their CPR skills covered with classes such as ***Save a Life! CPR AED Certification*** and ***Save a Life! Pediatric CPR and First Aid***. Offered throughout the year, these hands-on courses are taught in a relaxed and comfortable environment by certified instructors and are designed for anyone with limited or no medical training.

In addition to offering classes and lessons, the Park System also takes part in the ***Garden State Swimsuit and Goggle Drive***, which collects and distributes these necessary items to help underprivileged children utilize swim lessons. Last year the Park System also participated in the ***World's Largest Swim Lesson***. During the event, the Park System provided a day of free group swim lessons to local groups through its community outreach ***RecAssist*** program.

While ***Water Safety Month*** only lasts 31 days, the Park System's commitment to water safety can be seen year round in its classes, activities and facilities. For more information about the Park System, please visit www.MonmouthCountyParks.com or call the Park System at 732-842-4000, ext. 4312. For persons with hearing impairment, the Park System TTY/TDD number is 711. The Monmouth County Park System, created in 1960 by the Monmouth County Board of County Commissioners, is Monmouth County's Open Space, Parks, and Recreation agency.

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