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News Release
NEWS RELEASE

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Lifeguarding Experts to Identify Evidence Based Standards

WASHINGTON, DC, Wednesday, November 22, 2006 - The American Red Cross, the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) and the YMCA of the USA have announced the formation of *The United States Lifeguard Standards Coalition*. The group's mission is to research, identify and promote evidence-based standards for lifeguarding and water rescue. The first meetings will take place on December 3 and 4, 2006 at the New York Medical College School of Public Health in Valhalla, New York.

The Coalition will draw on the considerable strengths of its member organizations and other respected nonprofits, while soliciting the input and advice of experts worldwide. Meetings will be jointly chaired by David Markenson M.D., Chair of the American Red Cross Advisory Council on First Aid and Safety, Peter Wernicki, M.D, Medical Advisor to the United States Lifesaving Association, and Jerry DeMers, Ph.D., a YMCA Aquatic Advisory Committee volunteer and Chair of the Department of Kinesiology, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. "Less than a year ago, we promised the nation that we would undertake this critical work and we are now commencing the process to fulfill that promise," confirms Dr. Markenson, lead chair of the Coalition.

The United States Lifeguard Standards Coalition will provide a scientific basis for lifeguarding and water rescue techniques, skills and protocols. The process of identification of these techniques will represent the most comprehensive review of the lifeguarding literature to date. It will foster collaboration among the multiple disciplines with expertise that supports lifeguarding and aquatic rescue. These include nonprofit professional and technical organizations, scientific researchers and government agencies.

According to Dr. Wernicki, "There are many questions about best practice in aquatic lifesaving, but few answers that can be stated with scientific certainty. We intend to change that."

The anticipated outcome of this process is evidence-based standards for the most effective lifeguarding and water rescue skills. "We intend to invite the best respected

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organizations to the table to ensure robust debate and to leave no stone unturned in our research of existing evidence. Where that evidence is lacking, we'll recommend areas in which research is needed," said Dr. DeMers. The final guidelines and evidence review will be publicly available and distributed freely so that all may benefit from the process.

Examples of topics to be analyzed are scanning techniques, the appropriate length of continual assignment of lifeguards to surveillance duties, and methods of ensuring the highest possible levels of vigilance.

The United States Lifeguard Standards Coalition is funded, in part, by a grant from the National Swimming Pool Foundation.

For further information about The United States Lifeguard Standards Coalition and the December meeting, visit: www.lifeguardstandards.org.

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