

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DROWNING RESULTS IN IMPROVED BEACH SAFETY

Ventura, CA – The drowning death of a popular Ventura resident last December has proven to be the catalyst for the creation of the Safe Beach Program, an unusual community-government partnership that will improve the safety of beach-goers along Ventura's Pierpont Beach this summer.

Tim Barry, long-time Pierpont resident, drowned while trying to rescue his grand-niece who had been swept by a large wave from a rock jetty that extends into the ocean at San Buenaventura State Beach near Bangor Lane. The section of beach where Barry drowned has been patrolled by State Park Lifeguards for years, but the State Parks Department lacked the necessary funds to install lifeguard towers in the area and pay for the additional Lifeguards to staff them.

When Pierpont business owners Ted Teetsel and Trace Ornelaz learned that the lack of funds was the main barrier to improving Lifeguard service along Pierpont Beach, they undertook a fundraising effort in cooperation with the Pierpont Community Council. The result was enough money to cover one-third of the cost for three lifeguard towers for the 2007 summer season.

The Community Council then approached State Parks Superintendent Richard Rojas to see if the remaining funding could be found. Rojas in turn contacted Peter Brown, the City of

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Ventura's Community Services Manager, and the three entities—Pierpont Community Council, City of Ventura and California State Parks—successfully developed a strategy to significantly improve the safety of beach users. The centerpiece of the effort is a one-year pilot program to place three lifeguard towers along the Pierpont Beach area by the 4th of July. Two of the three towers will be installed at the ends of Seaward Avenue, Martha's Vineyard Court by Saturday, June 30. The tower at Greenock Lane is scheduled to be installed on Wednesday morning, June 27.

Once the towers are installed on the beach, California State Park Lifeguards will staff them seven days a week through Labor Day and on holidays through September.

For its part, the City of Ventura has agreed to bridge the funding gap between the funds raised by the Pierpont community and the actual cost of services with a one-time allocation of funds from its Community Services Department budget. Additionally, the Ventura Police Department has agreed to allow the State Park Lifeguards to use one of its 4x4 vehicles during the summer program.

Eagle Scouts are helping with the beach safety program by painting lane markers on the stairwells in the Pierpont area so that beach visitors can look back toward the lanes and quickly determine their location. This will help emergency responders to quickly determine where their services are needed.

In addition to upgraded Lifeguard service, the new safety program will see a major change for visitors to Marina Park, the City-operated park at the south end of Pierpont Beach. Swimming and wading at Marina Park are dangerous because of strong currents there. Lifeguards at the Greenock Lane tower will warn beach visitors to stay out of the water at Marina Park and direct them to the area north of the tower where water conditions are safer. The City will install signs in the area to warn visitors about the water hazards when Lifeguards are not on duty.

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Representatives from each of the three partnering groups will evaluate the new program over the summer to determine its effectiveness and decide how to improve it in coming years. They are also exploring various funding options to continue the program.

Further information on the Safe Beach Program for Pierpont Beach is available from the following sources:

California State Parks

Wes Chapin, (805) 585-1845 or wchap@parks.ca.gov.

On the web at www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=600.

City of Ventura

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