



Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation

September 2017

Russian River Water Safety Patrol | Report to Donors

“Sunset Beach Rescue 7/02/17: Young male, nine years old, struggling to get back to shore off main beach. River Patrol Unit entered the water with rescue tube and fins and brought the young boy back to shore and fitted him in a life jacket.”

-- Lifeguard report of one of eight Water Safety Patrol active rescues in 2017

As a generous supporter of the Water Safety Patrol, you already recognize the importance of Regional Parks’ unique lifesaving program. We have just received Supervising Lifeguard Sabrina Spear’s 2017 summer season report, and we’re proud to share this summary with you. **We hope you are proud to know that your gift truly saved lives along the Russian River.**

Staff Training and Preparation

Sabrina’s report details the extensive Russian River-specific training her teams undergo prior to patrolling the shores of the river from Memorial Day through Labor Day weekend. This training demonstrates the key outreach and safety functions the patrol provides, including:

- Advanced scouting and documentation of river hazards, which are different every year
- Identification of critical staging areas for rescue access
- Intensive equipment training
- Focused training on life jacket fittings, water safety talks and much more.



Dangerous Conditions due to Winter Rains

River hazards were significant this year. According to Sabrina, *“Due to late winter storms, the Russian River had unusually high, swift moving water on Memorial Day weekend. Lifeguard staff needed to wait until mid-June when the water receded and slowed to safely dive the river. The depths and hazards were charted on maps that River Patrol carried throughout the summer.”*

Reports of Active Rescues

Water Safety Patrol teams actively rescued eight people in danger of drowning, with all rescues occurring during the first two weekends of the summer when the river was running swiftly. The rescues involved five females and three males, ranging in ages from 9 to 29. Three people were rescued after their kayaks overturned. The other five were vulnerable swimmers who were clinging to branches or unable to return to shore from deep water. They were safely removed from the water and fitted with loaner life jackets by our teams.

Safety Education Contacts

The Water Safety Patrol's highly effective, one-on-one water safety talks take place in the water, at river's edge, and at loaner life jacket distribution boxes. Your support helped Regional Parks train and dispatch 21 total staff for this mission, including three rangers, eight senior lifeguards, and 10 aquatics program aides. **Regional Parks' teams recorded an impressive 17,677 safety contacts in 2017, with 6,024 of these contacts in Spanish.** These figures demonstrate an intense commitment to reaching as many visitors as possible during the Water Safety Patrol's presence, Fridays through Mondays throughout the summer.

Loaner life jacket activity

The loaner life jacket program is the most consistently visible aspect of the Water Safety Patrol's work. Between the Truck Patrol Unit and loaner life jacket distribution boxes at heavily used Steelhead Beach, Sunset Beach, and Forestville River Access, **your donation helped our teams fit 3,027 vulnerable swimmers with loaner life jackets!** These life jackets avert tragedy and provide comfort and security to people of all ages and ethnicities. With your help, we are able to continue to replenish this essential equipment.

Response from the public

Hollywood is full of fictional superheroes, but judging from the public response to our Water Safety Patrol teams, it seems we've got real-life superheroes here in Sonoma County! Sabrina's report shares dozens of people's compliments and expressions of gratitude for the patrol's service. *"This is a great program, quite a community service."... "Thank you for these great life jackets. Thank you Sonoma County! You guys are life savers."... "Thank you for teaching my son and me about water safety."... "This is an amazing service!"* **These sincere thanks reach the Water Patrol staff on duty, but we want to make sure these thanks also reach YOU, because your support makes this activity possible.**

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the Water Safety Patrol or any other project of the Parks Foundation. We're so grateful for your support!

Best wishes,



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