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Department of
Natural Resources

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Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: November 6, 2019

***Kids Don't Float* education program participation tops 200,000**

(Anchorage, AK) – Alaska's award-winning boating safety school program, *Kids Don't Float*, recently surpassed the 200,000-participant mark, and the Alaska Office of Boating Safety is celebrating that milestone at a *Kid's Don't Float* pool session with students from Anchorage's Bear Valley Elementary School on Thursday from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Kids Don't Float is a statewide injury-prevention program developed to address Alaska's rate of child and youth drowning incidents. In a collaborative effort between several state and federal agencies, organizations, and local grass-roots sponsors, *Kids Don't Float* includes a lifejacket loaner board component and an educational component.

The education program has three courses: a cold-water survival class in which students learn about the physiological effects of the first three stages of cold-water immersion and the importance of wearing a life jacket; a passenger safety class, empowering students to take their safety into their own hands; and the *Kids Don't Float* pool session, which allows students to actively learn and practice boating safety skills in a safe and controlled environment.

The *Kids Don't Float* education program has been implemented in partnerships with 836 schools and programs across the state, and there have been more than 500 pool sessions reaching more than 14,000 participants since the program began. Students have participated more than 200,000 times in *Kids Don't Float* pool sessions or classes.

"This program is shaping healthy habits for the next generation of boaters in Alaska by giving them an understanding of things they can do to be safer boaters and boat passengers," said Annie Grenier, education coordinator for the Office of Boating Safety.

The U.S. Coast Guard's national observational study of life jacket wear rates revealed that Alaska's rate among youth aged 13-17 is now higher than the national average.

“We hope that this is the beginning of a cultural shift surrounding the importance of life jacket use,” Grenier said. “Youth can be strong influencers and boating safety advocates when they share what they learn from the *Kids Don't Float* program with family members.”

For more information about how to get involved, or to request a class or pool session, contact Annie Grenier or find the Alaska Boating Safety program on social media.

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