



**An education initiative aimed at raising a nation of
sensible and capable water users**

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WaterWise Warriors – Report 2006

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WATERWISE WARRIORS

1. Proposal Summary

WaterWise is a non-profit organisation formed as an offshoot from the National Sea Rescue Institute to address the educational elements of safety and common sense around expanses of water, as well as protocol and procedure in emergency situations.

During the course of 2006, WaterWise Warriors became an official section 21, not for profit, company. The idea of a water safety education project is not a new one, but all media seem to be focused on youth and education and safety issues – and WaterWise continues to attract positive attention.

2. Statement of Need

In sunny South Africa, the sad fact is that drowning is the 2nd highest cause of death by injury, according to the latest data from the Medical Research Council (MRC). 61% of drownings occur in the sea, lakes or dams. Previously disadvantaged communities are at greater risk, and there are peaks in the graphs at 1-4 yrs and again between 9 and 14 years. Alcohol plays a significant part in drownings in South Africa. A shocking percentage of drownings over the age of 10 have been found to be over the legal limit for driving a motor vehicle.

Many South African youngsters are being introduced to water activities on the sea, rivers and lakes, without truly understanding the potential dangers this exposure brings. Still others drown accidentally while cooling off in a local water spot, due to lack of attention, and ignorance of basic water safety rules. Recent tragedies indicate that children from inland areas are at greater risk when holidaying at the coast, due to unfamiliarity with local sea conditions.

A horrific trend emerged during 2006 – school groups holidaying at the coast from inland towns are at huge risk of drowning in the sea:

Recent school group incidents where NSRI responded:

22 May 2005 - 7:30am (before lifeguards on duty). Alkant Strand near Richards Bay harbour. 150 pupils from Ndela High School in Piet Retief. Many pulled to safety, 8 drowned.

6 November 2005 - 14 year old girl drowns during school outing at Kogel Bay near Gordon's Bay.

22 March 2006 - 17 year old male from Colesburg High School in Grahamstown for science festival. Caught in rip current. Drowned.

17 August 2006 - 18 year old male part of 32 teens from Endzingeni Nazarene High School in Swaziland. On school trip. Caught in rip and drowned off Camps Bay beach.

23 August 2006 - 7 learners, from Hugo Rust Primary School in Wellington in rip. Herolds Bay. All made it to safety

27 August 2006 - Strandfontein near Vredendal on West Coast. 13 year old from Namibian primary school. 40 learners 4 in rip, one drowned.

18 September 2006 - 54 school kids from Lyndale Junior Secondary School near Mthatha. School teacher drowned while trying to save 19 year old pupil.

22 September 2006 - 13 year old from Bloemfontein on school trip of 30 kids to George. Caught in rip. Teacher and husband tried to rescue her but failed, they were in turn rescued by NSRI.

31 October 2006 – Natal South Coast. 4 school kids got in trouble. 3 adults went in to help. All 7 had to be rescued by fishermen in the area.

29 November 2006 - 4 children drown at Port St Johns Third Beach during a Sunday School outing from Mthatha. No lifeguards were on duty at the time.

Summer 2006 has highlighted several tragedies in home swimming pools, especially in inland areas.

3. Our Objectives for 2006

Whilst there are a number of excellent programmes teaching children to swim, Sea Rescue's WaterWise project is a series of workshops aimed at raising a generation of sensible and capable water users.

The cornerstone of the WaterWise programme for 2006 has been CPR training for all. At the beginning of the year, we set the goal of showing 5000 children how to perform CPR, and allow as many of them as possible to practice on a CPR doll.

Families in subsistence fishing communities needed information on capsizing techniques and essential equipment on boats, as well as correct procedure if loved ones were late in returning from sea.

As news of the WaterWise workshops spread, schools and clubs requested talks and demonstrations to younger groups of children. Our message for these children has been to ensure you have your PLAN, before you hit the beach, dam or river.

P – prepare (sunblock, hat, water)

L – look (at the weather and water – tides, currents, flags)

A – ask (an adult)

N – never (swim alone, with clothes on, when you are too tired, hungry, cold)

4. Our Achievements for 2006:

- 6465 South African youngsters from schools, clubs and institutions were shown CPR skills and encouraged to practice on a CPR doll, during a WaterWise Workshop
- That translates to 18 children per day, for 365 days of 2006
- We created and filmed a 15 minute educational DVD (many thanks to Deon Bing) and reproduced it for distribution into schools and libraries
- www.waterwise.org.za The website is live and has a link through to the NSRI site, as well as downloadable articles for teachers and parents
- WaterWise Inland – the programme for rural and farm children – commenced in Worcester with funding from the Department of Agriculture in the Western Cape
- WaterWise in Hout Bay – 3 adult workshops and grades 7, 8 and 9 from Sentinel Primary School were taught CPR and capsized bottle equipment and emergency procedures. A CPR doll was funded by JMC Brands, and capsized bottles and essential equipment sponsored and donated by Engen. CapeStorm donated product
- The West Coast Mayors Project invited WaterWise to present workshops at schools along the west Coast as part of a Summer Safety initiative
- Netcare 911 assisted at workshops on the beach, by sending paramedics and arranging demonstrations of the Vodacom Netcare 911 Surf Rescue Helicopter

5. 2007 Plans and Goals

With WaterWise creating so many waves of excitement and demand, we are poised at the start of 2007 with several ambitious goals:

- Write and publish a Teachers Resource Book, offering an easy to read, lesson by lesson aid for busy teachers who want to help raise a nation of more aware and more capable water users
- Write and commence the “train the trainer” program with teachers, health care workers and other concerned adults
- Train and employ a WaterWise Warrior in each provincial area, to take charge of school and club workshops, thereby multiplying the number of youngsters that can be reached in one year
- Ensure that by training select health care workers in rural areas, children in remote and informal settlement areas also receive access to WaterWise
- Reproduce and distribute the WaterWise educational DVD to schools and learning institutions throughout South Africa
- Develop a brochure for distribution at key seasonal areas (toll plazas, holiday accommodation, petrol stations)
- Most importantly, WaterWise remains committed to our primary goal, which is to minimize drownings in South Africa by teaching water safety skills and emergency procedures.

6. Wish list 2007

Funding required for projects:

- Teachers Resource Aid and WaterWise kit for schools
- Train the trainer – goal – 1000 trainers delivering WaterWise workshops by end 2007
- Youth at Risk
- Brochure for seasonal distribution (at Toll Plazas / Petrol Stations)

Line items required:

- CPR dolls
- Disposable resuscitation aides
- Laptop computer and updated software
- Digital Camera
- Training courses for educators (CPR, First Aid, Report Writing, SSA)
- DVD reproduction
- Staff training and salary

7. Conclusion

The support of funding partners makes it possible for WaterWise to significantly cover a bigger footprint – both along the coast, and venturing inland to the more rural areas where life skills such as CPR truly can mean the difference between life – and death.

We thank you most sincerely for your support of the WaterWise program – with your continued help, WaterWise can continue to grow and be offered as a life skill to all South Africans, thereby reducing deaths by drowning in our beautiful country.

WaterWise has grown enormously in the last year, and we are poised and ready to begin our train the trainer program, countrywide. This is a wonderful opportunity to highlight water safety at a national level, and roll-down the skills and training that make WaterWise a life skill for the masses.