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## YMCA South Florida experts stress importance of swimming safety amid report of tragic drowning



[Andrew Scheinthal](#)

HOLLYWOOD, FLA. (WSVN) - Experts at YMCA South Florida are stressing the importance of swimming safety amid reports of [a tragic drowning involving two brothers in a North Lauderdale swimming pool](#).

The YMCA had originally planned to partner with the Florida Panthers to talk about the risk of drowning ahead of Memorial Day weekend prior to the Wednesday night incident.

"We were planning to do a press conference to share information on water safety tips," said Tongelia Milton, executive director of communications at YMCA South Florida.

The YMCA believed the message is now more important than ever after tragedy struck one South Florida family when, investigators said, two brothers climbed a fence and drowned in a pool.

"With Memorial Day weekend upon us, we have to get serious, serious about this," said Sheryl Woods, president and CEO of YMCA South Florida.

On Thursday, experts focused on two aspects of water safety, the first being swim lessons.

"We have so many bodies of water between oceans, lakes, backyard pools, hotel pools that this is a year-round program," said Tara Montenegro, executive director of aquatics at the YMCA. "We at the YMCA run year-round swim lessons."

The second aspect of water safety is making sure parents keep a watchful eye on their children.

"We've created this water watcher tag that really says, 'Hey, whoever's wearing this water watcher tag at the time that your kids are in the water, you're responsible for the safety of these kids,'" said Woods.

The Florida Panthers are also doing their part to make sure the YMCA has the resources it needs to help kids stay safe by donating thousands of dollars to the nonprofit.

"This couldn't have been more timely to talk about water safety and drowning prevention, especially in light of the fact that it's Memorial Day weekend," said Lauren Simone, executive director of the Florida Panthers Foundation.

Part of the water safety press conference included providing free swimsuits to the community.

"We wanted to make sure that we allowed everybody in our communities to come pick out a free swimsuit so that they have more reason to sign up for swim lessons," said Montenegro.

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