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SECTION B

Saving lives, staying afloat on the water

RiverMedic 1 gives away life jackets, instills safety tips as boating season gets under way

BY JACKSON ADAMS
OF THE JOURNAL STAR

Team members with RiverMedic 1 were at Detweiller Marina on Saturday to kick off their riverfront patrols and to give water safety tips for Memorial Day and the summer season.

"A lot of what we do is prevention," said Steve Amstutz, a paramedic and program coordinator for RiverMedic 1, part of Advanced Medical Transport of Central Illinois. "We want to make sure people can stop accidents from happening."

With safety at the forefront of the event, the River Medic team was ready to give away life jackets to the first 100 chil-

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RON JOHNSON/JOURNAL STAR

Tom Rodgers of Manito and his 2-year old son, Andrew, look at the RiverMedic 1 ambulance boat docked Saturday at Detweiller Marina. Children who visited the boat received free life jackets.

dren to come by the event.

Amstutz said weather kept the turnout down, and some life jackets remained after Saturday's event. Anyone who still wants a life jacket can obtain one from RiverMedic 1, he added.

The RiverMedic 1 team will be on the water from noon to 6 p.m. every weekend and on all major holidays throughout the season.

SAFETY

Continued from Page B1

RiverMedic 1 also can be reached at rivermedic1@amtci.org.

"Most deaths in the water are drownings, and most of those are from people not wearing life jackets," Amstutz said. "The problem with kids is that they grow out of their life jackets so fast."

When fitting a child for a life jacket, there are two important things to keep in mind, Amstutz said. The life jacket should fit snugly. Also, the child should be within the life jacket's weight range.

Jackets usually have a place that lists the weight limit they can comfortably support.

Jackson Adams can be reached at 686-3196 or jadams@pjstar.com.

Along with providing general safety tips for families hoping to spend time on the water during the summer season, the event also allowed River Medic 1 to show off one of its patrol boats, which function as aquatic ambulances.

"These have the same equipment on them as an ambulance," Amstutz said. "We've got advanced support and are able to deal with anything that a normal ambulance can. Somebody can just call 911, and someone like myself will be dispatched."

The event was a reminder that the time to get out on the water is fast approaching.

"We're out here every chance we get," said Joe Maushard of Peoria, who came to the event with his son Neil to pick up a life jacket. "Sometimes, I'd like to live out here."

Please see **SAFETY**, Page B7