

Making Kaua'i's beaches a little safer one tube at a time

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THE GARDEN ISLAND

Anahola resident John Tyler is on a mission.

After learning that roughly 12 drownings happen annually on Kaua'i, he had an idea to place rescue tubes at unguarded beaches.

"Our lifeguards do a great job, but they can't be everywhere," Tyler said. "That's where the extra tubes can help."

As a lifeguard trainer for more than 15 years, Tyler felt the need was evident to

NORTH SHORE
EASTSIDE

have some basic lifesaving equipment on the dangerous unguarded beaches.

"It came to me simply to connect the dots and see some donated tubes on Kaua'i could help cut the drownings here," he said.

Things to remember if you attempt to rescue a distressed swimmer:

- ▶ Stay calm and focused. Make sure someone calls 911.
- ▶ Wear the rescue tube's sash around your chest and drag it behind you as you swim.
- ▶ Extend the tube to the distressed swimmer as you get close.
- ▶ Calm the distressed swimmer and you can both simply float using the tube until lifeguards arrive.
- ▶ Always keep the tube between you and the victim when nearing them.
- ▶ Don't force trying to get back to the same point on the beach. If needed, swim parallel to the beach until you find a safer way in.
- ▶ Panic causes more drowning than almost anything else. The rescue tube itself adds much security and calm for the victim.

"Bystanders want to help; I just saw the ability to give them and the victim a professional tool that makes it all easier."

And last weekend, a South Carolina man was rescued at Lumahal Beach by a fellow beachgoer using a recently placed rescue tube. Nikoma Ghigliari noticed the man in distress, grabbed the tube and swam out to assist Craig Touchton. Touchton was brought ashore by Ghigliari and Hanalei lifeguards on JetSkis, according to county spokesperson Mary Daubert.

Touchton was responsive at the scene, but was taken to Wilcox Memorial Hospital as a precaution, Daubert said.

"I was jumping for joy when I heard the news," Tyler said ecstatically. "The news was very validating."

Last fall, Tyler placed a trial rescue tube at Larsen's Beach on the island's Eastside. The tube stayed intact, so Tyler and Monty Downs, chair of the Water Safety Committee, installed seven more tubes at north and east shore beaches last month.

"The intention of the placement of these tubes is to provide a Good Samaritan swimmer a professional device that could help save someone in trouble from drowning," Tyler said.

Paying for the \$45 rescue tubes out of his pocket, Tyler placed them in locations where Downs knew drownings had occurred before.

Posted next to each tube is a laminated card that ex-

SOUTH SHORE
WESTSIDE

plains what the tube is for and guidelines of what to remember when the tube is used for an emergency.

Though Tyler has paid for the tubes himself, he said he is accepting donations to go toward the purchase of more.

"My vision is to have at least one donated tube at all the unguarded popular beaches on the island and cut the yearly drownings of Kaua'i significantly," he said. Despite the fact that the county is aware of the tubes, they cannot take responsibility for them, Tyler said.

Tyler, who runs a swim school for two months a year in Los Angeles, has offered a free half-hour training course to those interested in learning how to use the tubes. He also hopes beachgoers "adopt" the tubes as a way to keep an eye on them in the case one goes missing.

"I am asking people who frequent these beaches to become familiar with the tubes and to not take one home," Tyler said. "Their benefit is only possible staying at the beach."

▶ For more information, contact Tyler at jt Tyler@happy-swimmers.com or call 833-7062.



Contributed photos

Left: Rescue tubes, like this one at Tunnels Beach, were placed at seven other unguarded beaches around Kaua'i last month. Right: John Tyler (left) and Dr. Monty Downs place a rescue tube at Ke'e Beach last month. The rescue tubes are meant to help possible distressed swimmers at unguarded beaches.