



PRESS RELEASE
October 27, 2021

Life Ring Buoy Stations **Press Conference/Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

San Mateo County Harbor District
Pillar Point Harbor

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony to be held on
Wednesday, November 10th at 10:30 AM at Pillar Point Harbor, Half Moon
Bay California

On October 15, 2021 the San Mateo County Harbor District received a Coastal Development Permit Waiver for the installation of three emergency life ring buoy stations (LRBS) within Pillar Point Harbor.



The idea for the life-saving stations grew out of the tragic loss of Arunay Pruthi, a 12 year-old boy who was lost while attempting to rescue his younger brother who, while playing on the beach, was knocked off his feet and pulled into the sea by a “sneaker wave”. His little brother was rescued, but Arunay was overtaken by the heavy surf. For approximately fifteen minutes, Arunay’s family and other beachgoers watched helplessly as Arunay attempted to swim back to shore until he finally disappeared below the surface. They attempted to save him by throwing whatever items were available, including beach tents, into the water with the hope that they would provide sufficient flotation for Arunay. Sadly, none of these measures worked, and Arunay joined the unacceptable list of people who have drowned after being knocked down and pulled out to sea

by sneaker waves and rough surf. Had one of these Life Ring Buoy Stations been available that day, this tragedy, and the approximately 12 annual drownings that occur

along the Northern California Coastline each year due to sneaker waves, may have been prevented.

The maritime search for Arunay included the U.S. Coast Guard, San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, Coastside Fire District, San Mateo County Harbor District, members of the Sea Valor Organization, Arunay's family, and hundreds of volunteers. This team scoured the coastline from Big Sur to Bodega Bay. Sadly, during this same time period, at least three other people drowned on the nearby coastline after being swept out to sea by sneaker waves.

After the search for Arunay was suspended, Arunay's parents Tarun and Sharmistha Pruthi, worked with Sea Valor (www.SeaValor.org), the San Mateo County Harbor District, the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office, and engineer Brad Damitz to propose ways to prevent such needless drownings.

Sea Valor designed and built several Life Ring Buoy Station prototypes, and a strong collaborative effort which included a unanimous "yes" vote by the San Mateo County Harbor District Board of Harbor Commissioners, refined the final design. The initial three Life Ring Buoy Stations will serve as a pilot program which will hopefully expand to other areas along the California Coastline.

Eric Jones, Sea Valor's founder and Executive Director adds, "What became readily apparent during the search is that more needs to be done to prevent these drownings which result from sneaker waves catching people off guard and pulling them out to sea. Our beautiful California coastline presents some unique dangers such as sneaker waves, and education and raising awareness of these unique dangers is paramount in reducing these preventable drownings. Additionally, having life ring buoys readily available on beaches or areas that are particularly dangerous, will give family members and other beachgoers an immediate and safer rescue option than entering the water themselves while waiting for the professionals to arrive. Calling 911 should always be the first thing people do in an emergency, and one of the benefits of these new stations is that they list the exact location of the station so that the person calling 911 doesn't waste valuable time trying to figure out and tell the emergency dispatcher where they are."

"Installation of these life rings will make a profound difference by helping Northern Californians and visitors from other states stay safe on our beaches. It is the first step towards providing our community with the tools and knowledge they will need to create a more pleasant and secure beach-going experience. We want to channel our grief towards making a difference and saving other families from the pain of losing a loved one. Having lost our 12 yr old son Arunay to a sneaker wave in Jan 2021, we are dedicated to taking the safety ring campaign forward. We look forward to collaborating with San Mateo County Harbor District and other coastal counties to install these life saving stations. Arunay Foundation will continue to work towards educating young minds about beach safety, equipping our beaches with life-saving equipment, and informing the community about potentially hazardous beach conditions" stated Arunay's father, Tarun Pruthi.

Each station is approximately eight feet tall and consists of improved signage in multiple languages that warns of the dangers of sneaker waves. Additionally, each station is equipped with a life-ring buoy and 100 feet of attached line. The combination of improved signage paired with the life-ring buoys will undoubtedly improve safety awareness and will provide a much-needed means of rescue during the critical minutes before professional rescue resources arrive on scene.



“Turning a tragedy into a call to action, the Harbor District is proud to work with Sea Valor and the Arunay Foundation. These life-saving stations and buoys are a first step to improve water safety along our long, beautiful coastline in San Mateo County, to allow for situational awareness of the dangers of the mighty Pacific Ocean, and to educate visitors to be careful and cautious of water conditions on our beaches. I am proud of the Harbor Board’s leadership and vision, with its unanimous vote and commitment to coastside safety, and the collaboration between the Harbor District, San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office, Coastside Fire Protection District, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the State Parks Department. Harbor District General Manager Jim Pruettt was instrumental in ensuring that all stakeholders have been included in this process to bring coastside safety to San Mateo County,” stated Virginia Chang Kiraly, President of the San Mateo County Harbor Board of Commissioners.

“This collaboration is a wonderful example of all parties working together towards a common goal and providing public-safety resources to truly help all who spend time on the San Mateo County coast.”

“The San Mateo County Sheriff’s Office fully supports the installation of the safety rings at Pillar Point Harbor, and while the hope is the safety apparatus will never be needed, it is reassuring that the community will have access to these excellent life-saving tools,” San Mateo County Sheriff Carlos G. Bolanos, “and I extend my thanks to the San Mateo County Harbor District, Arunay Foundation, Sea Valor and everyone who has worked to make this initiative possible.”

The Harbor District will be installing three stations in the next few weeks in Pillar Point Harbor. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be held on Wednesday, November 10th at 10:30 am at Pillar Point Harbor. Officials will be available for questioning following the ceremony.

Contact Information:

James B. Pruettt, General Manager San Mateo County Harbor District 650-583-4962 jpruettt@smharbor.com	Eric Jones, Founder, Sea Valor Eric.jones@seavalor.org 202-491-6000 https://www.seavalor.org/seavalor-sneaker-wave-safety-program/	Tarun and Sharmistha Pruthi, Founders Arunay Foundation 240-520-1216 arunayfoundation.org
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