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Families take melanoma event message to heart



Kristen Suarez, 16, of West Palm Beach applies sunblock after competing in the sixth annual Spring Ocean Mile Swim held Saturday during the Sun Safety Awareness and Fun Event at Kreusler Park. By John Nelander, Special to the Daily News

Spring and summer in South Florida means having a blast at the beach, but the message at Saturday's Sun Safety Awareness and Fun event at Kreusler Park in Palm Beach was a serious one – protect your skin.

Children and adults who showed up got the message, along with freebies such as sun dials, sun safety awareness bags and UV detection key chains.

"I was so thrilled," said Lisa Richman, executive director of the Richard David Kann Melanoma Foundation, which sponsored the event. "Kids who had taken my Melanoma Monday Art Contest in school happened to be there. And when I asked them what they learned, they were able to recite everything their teacher taught them. "This is why we're out there, to share the information with the kids, to let them know how important it is for themselves and the community."

Some of the kids who showed up were family members of swimmers who participated in the sixth annual Spring Ocean Mile Swim. Swimmers showed up at 6:15 a.m. and battled strong winds and rough surf.

The National Weather Service in Miami said there was a high risk of rip currents at Palm Beach County beaches through 8 p.m. today, and a moderate risk of rip currents Sunday into early next week.

For Richman, one of the highlights of the Sun Safety event was meeting a boy from Freedom Shores Elementary in Boynton Beach who participated in the melanoma art contest. She asked what he learned, and he said: "That you need to wear a hat, wear sunglasses and put on sunscreen."

Richman said: "It's the perfect opportunity to educate children while they're in school so you can empower them to lead healthy lives."

Melanoma can strike people of all ages, Richman added. "It's not an old person's disease."