

## Kids learn life-saving skills

By Denise Ruttan

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**Denise Ruttan | The Stayton Mail**  
Taniaya Wagner, 14, of Sublimity practices "saving" Jerikah Meeks, 12, of Stayton during a Junior Lifeguard GuardStart class on July 22 at Stayton Family Memorial Pool.

A new lifeguard program at Stayton Family Memorial Pool teaches 11- to 14-year-olds job and life skills as well as basic CPR and rescue techniques.

This is the first summer for the Junior Lifeguard GuardStart program, a precursor to the official lifeguard certification classes — and the program filled up quickly, pool manager Rebekah Meeks said.

Eleven out of 12 spaces were filled this summer. The program ends the first week of August.

The program is an opportunity for kids to test the waters of whether they want to become a lifeguard.

"This is a job for them," Meeks said. "They have to come dressed in their guard shirt and bring their guard pack just like a regular lifeguard."

If kids participate every year, it could also translate into a paying job, Meeks said. She already has her eye on three or four kids who could be future lifeguards.

"As they mature they understand the work ethic, how to deal with patrons and the employee/employer relationship," Meeks said. "It looks good on their résumés and guarding is a life skill."

The program began as a way for the pool to look for new employees and to add another fun activity to their lineup.

Taniaya Wagner, 14, has been swimming for five years and is hoping to get a year-round job out of the experience.

"I want to help people and be around water," Wagner said.

Students learned different ways to rescue people and how to perform CPR, but also something beyond that.

"Lifeguarding teaches leadership and how you can handle situations," Wagner said. "People can look up to you as a role model."

Kenadee Davidson, 11, of Jefferson, was also hoping for future employment. She wants to

work with her sister, who is a supervisor at the Stayton pool.

"I do swim team and I like to swim a lot," Davidson said. "And I want to save people's lives."

Instructor Laura Williams said the program helps kids get a head start on learning lifeguarding skills.

"Lifeguarding in general teaches teamwork and leadership," Williams said. "You're putting a lot of responsibility on kids very young. This class teaches them how to take that responsibility and how to respond to emergency situations and stressful situations."

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