



# Media Release

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Release: August 29, 2008  
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## **Parks and Recreation Statement Regarding Stephens Lake Drowning**

The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department is deeply saddened by the unfortunate incident that occurred at Stephens Lake Park on Thursday, August 28. The department extends its thoughts and sincere sympathy to the family and friends of Jared Isaiah Healea.

At this time, the drowning appears to be a tragic accident. The department wishes to inform park users that Stephens Lake Park and the lake itself remain open for public use.

The Parks and Recreation Department would like to remind park visitors that swimming is allowed in the marked, designated area only. Complete swimming beach rules and guidelines are posted on site. For the safety of all concerned, swimmers are strongly encouraged to follow these rules.

The swimming beach at Stephens Lake Park opened in August 2004. Since that time, thousands of residents have frequented the beach and swimming area. The drowning is the first to have occurred since the park opened to the public.

Stephens Lake and the swimming beach is an unguarded, swim at your own risk facility. This type of facility is widely used throughout the country. There is no admission fee. The lake is open from May 1 to September 30 during daylight hours, from dawn to dusk.

Parks and Recreation staff drafted the master plan of Stephens Lake Park in 2001-02, which included the swimming beach. The need for public swimming was identified in the master planning process for the park. After considering various options, it was decided to develop the swimming area as an unguarded, swim at your own risk beach area similar to the public swimming beaches at Finger Lakes State Park, Lake of the Ozarks State Park, and other parks.