



## Nomination for Ruffennach Communicator of the Year Award 2011

**Point of Contact:** U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Galveston District, Public Affairs Office ([swgpao@usace.army.mil](mailto:swgpao@usace.army.mil))

**Executive Summary:** Kristine Brown, natural resources specialist/park ranger for the USACE Galveston District, is nominated for the 2011 Ronald J. Ruffennach Communicator of the Year Award. Brown was instrumental in the development and execution of the USACE Galveston District's Water Safety Program; an aggressive water safety community outreach and public information campaign to educate those who use Corps facilities and enhance the commitment of community leaders to promote public safety and reduce water-related fatalities. The innovative campaign included partnering with nationally recognized water-safety organizations and using social media to maximize outreach efforts to ultimately exceed campaign objectives and contribute to a zero increase in water related fatalities in the district. Brown's extensive knowledge of the Corps Water Safety Program, coupled with the partnerships she cultivated throughout her 19-year career enabled her to effectively serve as a trusted subject matter expert and key USACE spokesperson to communicate critical information about the district's Water Safety Program.

**Background of Nominee's Efforts:** An esteemed employee of the Corps, Brown dedicated more than 500 hours educating Texas visitors and residents about drowning prevention and water-related fatalities. Operating under a tight budget of \$1,750, Brown assisted in implementing creative initiatives using existing resources, social media, and the power of partnering to achieve many "firsts" to reach an audience of more than 1,000,000, generate about 13,700 search results on Google about the district's program, and exceed all campaign goals and objectives. Brown worked to aggressively disseminate the district's water safety message and creatively implement low-cost approaches including:

- Gaining the support of nearly 20 community leaders and partnering with five counties to recognize water safety as a community priority
- Co-authoring a bill that was passed by the Texas Legislature to recognize April as Water Safety Month in Texas
- Engaging in 22 community outreach and high-profile events; making one-on-one contact with nearly 5,000 adults and children (media day events, picnics in the park and fairs)
- Disseminating key messages through media outlets across Texas; through the Galveston Chamber of Commerce e-newsletters (reaching 5,000), via radio PSAs (reaching 36,000) and the web
- Purchasing water-safety PSAs in movie theaters to reach an audience of 10,000
- Implementing social media to reach an audience of 550
- Securing 900 lifejackets for distribution and use at Lifejacket Loaner Stations in Houston

Brown's involvement not only provided direct contact with target audiences, she effectively told the Army's story, and was essential in helping the district meet its stated objectives and communicate "**safety first**" and "**water-aware**" messages through numerous outreach events in 2011.

Throughout 2011, Brown conceived of and executed extensive outreach initiatives to maximize contact with residents and media to convey essential information about the district's Water Safety Program. Thinking outside the box, Brown assisted the Public Affairs Office in accomplishing the following:

- Reaching approximately **24, 000, 000** using broadcast, print, online and social media placements to educate the public about water safety
- Disseminating water safety messages to **5,000** Galveston Chamber of Commerce members via a weekly newsletters containing the Corps' water safety ads
- Airing **408** USACE water safety commercial PSAs in two Houston movie theaters on 17 screens for eight weeks to an audience of more than 10,000
- Hosting **22** community outreach events
- Partnering with **19** national, state and local organizations to support the water safety program
- Garnering the support of **17** local politicians supported the water safety campaign
- Creating **8** radio public service announcements, broadcasted to an audience of 36,000
- Writing **4** news releases distributed to media and **4** proclamations presented to staff recognizing April 1, 2011, as USACE Galveston District's Water Safety Program Kick-off Day
- Co-authoring **1** bill passed by the Texas Legislature to recognize April as Water Safety Month in Texas (co-authored by Galveston District Park Ranger Kristine Brown)
- Obtaining **0** water-related fatalities at USACE Galveston District facilities

In 2012, the USACE Galveston District's Water Safety Program was recognized at a USACE Best Management Practices (BMP) Session, held in conjunction with the annual International Boating and Water Safety Summit, and received first place in the USACE Herbert A. Kassner Award's Community Relations Category, and now serves as a model for sister district offices to emulate – an achievement that arguably would not have been accomplished without Brown's dedication and hands-on approach.

Throughout the campaign, Brown communicated transparently and strategically to deliver Corps' key messages in a timely and honest manner and in doing so became a trusted image the public came to rely on for water-safety matters. The district's water safety campaign greatly ***exceeded all campaign goals*** in support of the division, encouraged community participation, brought awareness of this growing problem that unnecessarily claims the lives of thousands annually.

Therefore, it is with great pleasure that the USACE Galveston District is proud to honor Kristine Brown with this nomination as she is an invaluable member of our team and most deserving of this prestigious recognition.

//signed//  
Sandra Arnold  
Public Affairs, USACE Galveston District



# Ruffennach Award

## Community Engagement

It is widely accepted that everything is bigger in Texas. The USACE Galveston District staff ensured the water safety program was no different, partnering with local governments across the state in order to proclaim April 1, 2011, as USACE Galveston District's Water Safety Program Kick-off Day. Throughout 2011, **Kristine Brown** participated in more than 20 water safety events to educate more than 1, 000,000 people.

On March 24, 2011, the City of Galveston presented USACE Galveston District Commander Col. Christopher W. Sallese and Twila Lindblade, a representative of **U.S. Congressman Ron Paul's office**, with a proclamation supporting the Corps' efforts to communicate water safety information to families.

The **City of Houston** presented Safe Kids Greater Houston (of which the district is a member of) with a water safety proclamation to kick off "**April Pools Day**," an educational water safety campaign in the greater Houston community.

The Safe Kids Greater Houston Water Safety Team was led by USACE Galveston District Park Ranger and Water Safety Program Manager **Kristine Brown** of the district's Houston Project Office.

Brown, other Corps park rangers and USACE Galveston District staff continually provided water safety tips and lifejacket demonstrations to the public through outreach activities scheduled throughout the year.

In **Houston**, Brown presented a water safety program to local elementary school children in conjunction with Texas Children's Hospital and Safe Kids Houston March 26, 2011.



**USACE Galveston Commander Col. Christopher W. Sallese, Corps Park Ranger Kristine Brown and "Bobber" the Water Safety Dog accept a proclamation from the mayor of Galveston.**



**Kristine Brown fits children with lifejackets during a Kids Day Event at Kemah, Texas.**



**Building Strong!**





# Ruffennach Award

On April 1, 2011, USACE Galveston District participated in a press conference with local agencies as part of Safe Kids Houston kicking off the water safety campaign at the Houston Texans YMCA. The **Sixth Annual April Pools Day Media Event Kick Off** stressed the importance of water safety during the 2011 recreational season and was broadcast on television and widely covered by Houston-area media (the nation's fourth largest city), potentially reaching six million Houstonians.



**April Pools Day Proclamation from the City of Houston**

Additionally, USACE Galveston District's Houston Project Office participated in the **Ninth Annual Picnic in the Park and Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Awareness Fair** April 16, 2011, at George Bush Park located in the district's Barker Reservoir. **Kristine Brown**, Corps employee Bill Krampe and "Bobber" handed out water safety information and water safety coloring books to children, adults and parents as part of Harris County Mental Health and Retardation's annual event.



**Kristine Brown watches a student at the Water Safety Carnival at Jessop Elementary School spin the Bobber Water Safety Wheel**

The last Thursday of each month in April, May, June, July and August 2011, **Kristine Brown** and staff assisted in presenting water safety messages to children and parents during a free night at the **Children's Museum of Houston**.

Children took part in the bi-annual **Water Activity Day Event (W.A.D.E.)** June 14, a nationally recognized, award-winning training program developed by the Houston Safe Boating Council (HSBC). Developed as a way to promote safe boating through education, W.A.D.E. has become a highly successful sought after program. The USACE Galveston District team has been a partner with the HSBC since 2001 and supports their water safety awareness initiatives.



**Picnic in the Park at Barker Reservoir**



**Building Strong!**



# Ruffennach Award

## Legislation passes declaring April as Water Safety Month in Texas

Safe Kids Greater Houston is a local coalition made up of health and safety experts, educators, corporations, foundations, government agencies and volunteers who come together to educate and protect families.

Led by Galveston District's Park Ranger and Water Safety Program Manager **Kristine Brown**, the Safe Kids' Water Safety Coalition initiated a variety of initiatives in 2011.

Working with Dr. Kim Cheung, M.D., Ph.D., assistant professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Community and General Pediatrics at the University of Texas-Houston Medical School, **Brown** created a **statewide impact** to increase awareness of water-related injuries in an effort to reduce the number of drowning and near-drowning incidents involving children. Effective September 2011, legislation passed in the State of Texas declaring April as **Water Safety Month in Texas – a first!**

## Lifejacket Loaner Stations and Boy Scouts

Created by the USACE Galveston District, the **Lifejacket Loaner Program** provides the public with free U.S. Coast Guard-approved lifejackets for use while swimming at apartment complexes and boating at Corps projects and recreational sites throughout the Houston and Galveston areas. Enlisting the help of local volunteers, **Boy Scouts** with the Sam Houston Area and Galveston councils executed "Eagle" projects to build multiple loaner stations in 2011. Working with the Water Safety Coalition's partner Greater Houston Pool Management, **Brown** was able to secure 900 lifejackets for distribution and use at loaner stations, to prevent the number of drowning and near-drowning incidents involving children.

**United States Coast Guard**  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

**American Red Cross**  
Greater Houston Area Chapter

**Greater Houston Pool Management**

**Harris County**  
**HCPHES**  
Public Health & Environmental Services

*Kristine Brown accepts 800 donated personal flotation devices on behalf of the Corps' Water Safety Program at the Houston Project office*



**Building Strong!**