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Left – Julie Honn, CEO, Sammamish Chamber of Commerce
Right – Mudra Machewad, Founder, LakeSafe Initiative

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: **LAKESAFE INITIATIVE**

Submitted by Mudra Machewad

Every summer, families across Sammamish gather at local lakes to enjoy the sunshine, water, and time together. But behind these moments of joy, there is a reality many don't fully see - open water is very different from a pool. Cold water shock, sudden depth changes, limited visibility, and the absence of lifeguards create a combination of hazards that most families simply don't anticipate. In King County alone, open water has accounted for more than half of all drowning deaths - part of a pattern of over 190 preventable losses in just the past seven years.

The LakeSafe Initiative, founded by Sammamish youth leader Mudra Machewad, began with a simple but urgent question: How can we help prevent tragedies before they happen?

Mudra Machewad, Founder, LakeSafe Initiative, with Issaquah Kiwanis Board Members

Launched in September 2025 as a youth-led, community-powered effort, LakeSafe focuses on drowning prevention and open-water safety awareness. The initiative was born from experiences close to home - including a moment when a boat carrying neighbors unexpectedly flipped on Lake Sammamish, and Mudra's father, who doesn't know how to swim, watched helplessly as the situation rapidly escalated. Thankfully, quick action from others prevented a tragedy. Just weeks later, a separate drowning in the lake deeply impacted the community. Conversations in schools, neighborhoods, and homes reflected shared grief - and a shared question: how can we prevent this?

What started as a question has grown into a collaborative movement. Since its first community activation at TEDxSammamish Women in November 2025, LakeSafe has shown up consistently - at civic events, service clubs, school programs, and partner gatherings - building awareness one conversation at a time.

"I believe leadership begins with service," says Mudra. "The heart to serve, the call to lead, and the courage to engage - this is service leadership."

LakeSafe works to make safety visible and accessible before people enter the water. Rather than focusing only on response after incidents occur, the initiative emphasizes early awareness, education, and community engagement - meeting people where they are, at the right time. In practice, that means multilingual safety signage, loaner life-jacket stations during peak season, visible rescue equipment, and hands-on community education -

Left to Right – Jessica Schafer, Executive Director, Friends of Lake Sammamish State Park; Mudra Machewad, Founder, LakeSafe Initiative; Kevin Goodrich, Northwest Region Manager, Washington State Parks; Julie Davies, Customer Service Specialist, Washington State Parks

four simple but coordinated programs that close the gaps most often present when incidents occur.

In recent months, LakeSafe has brought this approach to life through community activations across Sammamish and Issaquah. At events like the Sammamish Community YMCA's Annual Fund Drive - where LakeSafe was featured in a live Safety Around Water conversation - Connect for Good: Sammamish Nonprofit Expo, and Spring into Adventure at Lake Sammamish State Park, the initiative created spaces where families could learn, ask questions, and engage in meaningful conversations about water safety.

Through just these two events alone, LakeSafe connected with over 5000 community members and facilitated more than 2000 one-on-one conversations with families, students, and residents. These weren't just quick interactions - they were real discussions about awareness, preparedness, and simple steps that can make a difference.

One of the most powerful aspects of this work is its focus on timing. Many prevention efforts happen too late - after someone is already in the water. LakeSafe shifts that moment earlier, encouraging families to think about safety before they even step onto the shoreline.

The initiative also brings together a growing network of 18+ partners spanning county and city government, public health agencies, the state legislature, fire and rescue, schools, children's health, parks stewardship, the local business community, and civic organizations - all working to close prevention gaps and expand equitable access to safety education before peak season arrives.

But beyond partnerships and numbers, what stands out most is the response from the community.

Families stop to ask questions. Kids engage with curiosity. Parents share their own experiences and concerns. Conversations that start small often lead to deeper awareness - and that's where change begins.

LakeSafe is built on the belief that prevention doesn't always come from large, complex systems. Sometimes, it starts with a simple conversation, a visible reminder, or a moment of awareness that shifts how someone thinks and acts.

As the initiative continues to grow, there are many ways for the community to get involved. LakeSafe welcomes volunteers who are passionate about community service, youth leadership, and safety awareness. There are also opportunities for organizations and partners to collaborate in expanding outreach and bringing resources to more families.

With summer approaching, the goal is simple: to ensure that more families across Sammamish, Issaquah, and the surrounding communities can enjoy our lakes safely, confidently, and with greater awareness.

Because when it comes to water safety, small actions - taken at the right time - can make all the difference.

WHAT'S COMING: SPRING & SUMMER 2026

As we head into peak lake season, LakeSafe is continuing to expand its outreach:

- **May 15, 4:30–7 PM** - LakeSafe Confluence 2026 at Lake Sammamish State Park (free, open to all) - an evening of expert conversations on public health and marine safety, four hands-on community safety stations, and public action commitments from 18+ partner organizations
- **May 18–24** - Lake Safety Awareness Week (aligned with National Safe Boating Week to promote early awareness before peak lake activity)
- **Ongoing** – Community outreach and safety awareness activations across Sammamish, Issaquah, and surrounding lake spaces

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