

Wise ways with water

AFTER three siblings drowned in a hotel swimming pool in Langkawi, a Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) academic felt the need to write a book on the joys and dangers of being in water.

Prof Tengku Fadilah Tengku Kamalden the head of UPM's Faculty of Education Studies Sports Studies Department said her objective was all about water safety.

"I had written this book for parents to be more knowledgeable on the risks and dangers lurking near the pool and how to enjoy water safely," she says.

While the book titled *Parental Guide to Water Safety* was for parents, it led to the initiation of Water Wise camps for children, which aims to teach children how to keep

themselves safe when near or in bodies of water.

"A person can survive if they know how to float," she says, adding that there have been cases where even strong swimmers have ended up drowning.

The camp is to teach non-swimmers how to survive in water, how to use everything around them as well as what to do if someone else falls in.

She adds that if a person fell into water, he should lie flat on his back and start shouting.

"Be in a horizontal position," she says, adding that in many cases people would panic and try to stay

upright, which would make them sink.

She adds that when trying to rescue someone in the water, one should never be in contact with the victim.

"Use any means to reach out to them. If you really need to jump in, make sure that there is someone on land with something to pull you back to shore," she shares.

She personally keeps a length of rope in her car all the time, and if she needs to jump in to rescue someone, she will belay the rope and tie it around her waist before going into the water.

The camp also teaches children to

use items around them, for example, balls or pails, to help them float.

"We teach them how to handle emergencies the right way." It's about being wise around water. It's not a swimming class.

"Those who come for the camp will learn how to throw ropes as well," she says, adding that even six-year-old children are capable of saving lives by throwing a rope far enough into the water.

The camp will also provide different scenarios to teach children how to react in cases of emergency.

So far, there have been three Water Wise camps.

Prof Fadilah says that there are plans to transform the UPM swimming pool to a "Water Wise lab" and have a series of camps for schools.