

Official Newsletter  
of the  
California Surf Lifesaving  
Association

The **CALSURF**  
V o l u m e 2 1 N o . 1

# Mike Beuerlein Issue



**Rookie School 1982**

## 2016 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President	Mike Beuerlein
Vice President	Bill Humphreys
Secretary	Kai Bond
Treasurer	Rob Williams
1st Delegate	Mike Silvestri
2nd Delegate	Gus Avila
3rd Delegate	Jay Butki
4th Delegate	Casey Graham
Past President/ Advisor	Rob McGowan

On the Cover: Start of a promising career 1982

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## 2016/2017 CALENDAR

USLA Fall Meeting  
November 3-5  
Denver, CO

CSLSA Regionals  
July 22  
Coalition - Coronado, Silver Strand, Imerial

Taplin Relays  
August 5  
Hermosa Beach

USLA Nationals  
August 9-12  
Volusia Fl

CSLSA Fall Meeting  
October 12-13  
L.A. City

## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Certification – Vince Lombardi  
Competition – Jay Butki  
Exchange – Doug Leach  
Special Awards – Al Pepito  
Legislation – Adam Sandler  
Membership – Charlotte Graham  
Newsletter – Richard Godino  
Training – Mike Scott  
Junior Lifeguards – Skeeter Leeper  
Website – Bob Moore  
Ways and Means – Rob Williams  
Public Education – Mike Silvestri  
Public Relations - Kai Bond  
Professional Standards - TBD  
Grants - TBD  
Original Founders - Rob McGowan  
By Laws/Policies & Procedures - Bill Humphreys  
Statistics - Ian Burton

## CAL SURF MAGAZINE

**Cal Surf News Magazine**  
*is the official publication of the*  
**California Surf Lifesaving Association**  
P.O Box 366, Huntington Beach CA 92648  
[www.CSLSA.org](http://www.CSLSA.org) Fax (714) 374-1500

### Editor

Richard Godino – L.A. City

### Contributors

Mike Beuerlein - Huntington City  
Mike Bartlett - Huntington City

### Photo Contributors

Mike Bartlett - Huntington City  
Miscellaneous

### Marketing and Promotion

Scott Hubbell – L.A. County

## ARTICLES NEEDED!

Agency Profiles / How to Articles  
California Lifeguard History  
Junior Lifeguard Stories / Unusual Rescues  
Submit online to [newsletter@cslsa.org](mailto:newsletter@cslsa.org)

*The CSLSA is a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of California. Its principle goals are water safety, education, and the promotion of professional lifeguarding standards. These goals are accomplished through beach safety presentations to school groups, educational exchange programs with members of the International Lifesaving Federation and participation in regional and national competitions.*



## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

### **MIKE BEUERLEIN**

I have been honored to serve CSLSA as President for the past 7 years. But this is the first time I stand before you as a retiree. After more than 34 years with the City of Huntington Beach, although my heart was not ready, my body said it was time. While I truly miss being a part of a daily operation dedicated to saving lives, I can honestly say that I am comforted by the fact that there are no finer Lifeguards than those who guard the open water in the state of California. I look forward to continuing to dedicate my time as a volunteer to further the mission of the California Surf Lifesaving Association.

California Lifeguards lost a dear friend on May 22, 2016. Alex Peabody passed away at the age of 55 after a long battle with ALS. His dedication, vision and passion for the profession of open water lifesaving was contagious. Alex's was involved in virtually every aspect of lifeguarding, from towers and patrol unit, to embracing his duties as a peace officer, to serving on the CSLSA Executive Board of Directors and the USLA Board of Directors, to his commitment as a lifesaving activist, to rescue boat operations and service as a training officer, to his final contribution as the chief administrator for the California State Parks Lifeguard service. No one was more dedicated to the profession of lifesaving than Alex Peabody. He will be missed, but never forgotten.

Thank you to the Coronado Beach Surf Lifeguard Association for hosting the Spring 2016 CSLSA Board of Director's Meeting. Sean Carey, Damon Bassett and crew did an outstanding job with all of the events. Since then, the CSLSA Executive Board represented our members at the Spring 2016 USLA Meeting in Gettysburg, Virginia. In addition, CSLSA Executive Board members have attended two Executive Board meetings and officiated at regionals and nationals. Our Executive Board will take information from this meeting to represent our members at the Fall 2016 USLA Meeting in Denver, Colorado on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you to the Huntington State Beach Lifeguard Association, Chris Egan, Diego Bussato, Gus Avila, Casey Graham, Scott Hubbell and all who volunteered to make the 2016 California Surf Lifesaving Championships such a success for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row at Huntington State Beach.

Likewise, we appreciate the Los Angeles County Surf Lifesaving Association, Jay Butki, Charlotte Graham, Scott Hubbell and all who volunteered to represent CSLSA and make the 2016 USLA National Lifeguard Championships at Hermosa Beach an event to remember. In 2010, Chris Okamoto from Hoag Hospital in Newport Beach approached me and asked if CSLSA would partner with *Project Wipeout* to help restore the program to its previous level of acclaim. For the past 7 years, CSLSA has adopted *Project Wipeout* as its signature public education program and provided the technical expertise and personnel to produce most of the program components. This year, Ian Burton (CSLSA's *Project Wipeout* Coordinator) and Mike Silvestri (CSLSA Public Education Chairman) continued to do a great job working with Hoag Hospital's new *Project Wipeout* Director, Lauren Tabios. Kai Bond was the Master of Ceremonies for the 2016 Lifeguard Conference and the agenda included sharks, lightning, spinal injuries and surfer's ear. We appreciate all of the agencies that continue to provide the staffing to keep *Project Wipeout* events (Orange County Fair, Imaginology, Festival of Children) going

[PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, from page 3]

,going throughout the year. In 2017, Chief Rob Williams has expressed an interest for the home agency, the Newport Beach Lifeguards, to assume a more active role in managing *Project Wipeout*. CSLSA will continue to assist and support *Project Wipeout* as much as possible.

CSLSA's partnership with the John Wayne Cancer Foundation (JWCF) continues to be solid and represents our largest Public Education program to date. 27,000 Junior Lifeguards throughout the state will receive critical education this summer on skin cancer recognition and prevention. Educating these 9 to 17 year old children is a vital step in cancer prevention for communities up and down the California Coastline. JWCF introduced the *Block the Blaze* program to USLA and efforts continue to make this a national program.

CSLSA Board Members continue to be actively involved in the California Marine Safety Chief's Association and the Orange County Training Officer's Association. These collaborations have elevated our profession.

As many of you recall, at the Spring 2016 CSLSA Meeting, I shared my optimism about the USLA elections and new strategic plan. I talked about how USLA programs have benefited our region, chapters and agencies. Then the CSLSA Executive Board went to Spring 2016 USLA Meeting, ironically held near the Gettysburg Battlefield. We entered the meeting with optimism. As much as I would like to continue to be optimistic, there was an immediate vibe of opposition when we arrived. All of our major proposals (USLA Delegate Count, USLA Life Membership Policy and USLA Life Membership Nomination) were voted down.

I have had 3 very direct conversations with USLA President Peter Davis since the Gettysburg meeting and he has told me that he understands CSLSA's dissatisfaction with USLA's failure to resolve the disproportionate regional delegate representation issue and the unprofessional regionalism that has created problems in the USLA Life Membership process. President Davis told me that he is committed to finding solutions, but so far, we have heard plenty of rhetoric and witnessed no action. When we go to Denver in 3 weeks, the CSLSA Executive Board needs to com-

municate collectively, and individually, that if USLA does not take action to correct the existing inequities, CSLSA will be forced to reevaluate its participation in the national body.

There is a growing need for more and better Open Water Lifeguard Standards in the State of California. Since Lifeguards do not have an organization like POST or the California State Fire Marshal, it is time for either the California Marine Safety Chiefs Association (CMSCA) or CSLSA to fulfill that role. This could be accomplished on an ongoing basis by creating standards that state, local or private agencies could adopt if they so desire. We could start by adopting existing USLA standards and then add to them. CMSCA or CSLSA could also create training curriculums and consider issuing certifications. If CMSCA does not have an interest in fulfilling this need role, the time has come for CSLSA to seriously consider stepping up.

Many thanks to Brendan Daly, Jill Bates and the Santa Cruz Surf Lifesaving Association for hosting this meeting.

Lifeguards for Life!



**GOODBYE ALEX**



## **MICHAEL A. BEUERLEIN**

### **34 YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

**BY MIKE BARTLETT**

The oldest of four boys, Michael A. Beuerlein's love for sports was sewed in the competitiveness amongst playing with his brothers while growing up in Fullerton. When two of them chose football, Mike chose swimming and water polo and went on to play varsity in both at Servite High School. He would soon discover his passion and was drawn to the shores of Huntington Beach where he tried out for Ocean Lifeguard and began his 34-year career for the City in 1982.

While rowing on the crew team and studying social ecology with an emphasis in criminology at University of California in Irvine, Beuerlein was contemplating a career in the legal profession. After completing his Bachelor's Degree in 1986, Beuerlein was a rising star in the lifeguard ranks saving lives for 4 summers before promoting to Senior Guard. In 1987, he promoted again to Lifeguard Supervisor. Pursuing his goal of practicing law, Mike came one step closer when he was accepted to Loyola Law School in 1988. That same year, Beuerlein was credited with rescuing several teenagers who were trapped by rising storm waters in the Santa Ana River. He and another lifeguard were later awarded with a national Medal of Valor by the United States Lifesaving Association. Beuerlein's talents were soon recognized in 1989 when he was selected as

an acting Marine Safety Officer to temporarily fill a vacancy.

With his focus primarily on a law degree, Beuerlein continued his studies and worked the beach to pay his way through law school through 1990. At that point, a permanent Marine Safety Officer position finally opened with the City and he decided to take the exam. Beuerlein was offered the position and made the tough choice to accept the opportunity for a career in lifesaving over a career practicing law. His love for the beach and lifesaving became his new passion, one that would soon shape his life and reveal his gift for public speaking.

As a new Marine Safety Officer, Beuerlein took his job seriously. He was selected to represent Huntington Beach, and for that matter West Coast lifesaving, to appear on the Geraldo Rivera Show in New York. The show's title "Riding the Wave of Rescue and Romance" hardly seemed like an opportunity for Mike to show case the lifesaving profession in a positive light. Using his eloquent skills for storytelling, Beuerlein's oratory gift came to light despite the cast of shirtless lifeguards more interested in displaying their physiques than their talents. Wearing a Class A uniform, complete with a badge, patches and polished shoes, Mike was asked to recount his 1988 River Rescue. He skillfully delivered a detailed account of the rescue and events surrounding the near tragedy. Unknown to Beuerlein at the time, the show's producers had made prior arrangements for one of the teens he saved to come out on stage with his mother and publicly thanked Mike for saving his life. It was a touching display of compassion and professionalism. The show was nationally syndicated and a rising star was discovered.

The next year, a Marine Safety Lieutenant position in the city opened so Beuerlein naturally decided to take the exam. Although he had less than two years experience as a Marine Safety Officer, Mike was selected and promoted to the number two position in the Marine Safety chain of command.

The chief lifeguard then and now retired, Bill Richardson explained, "I found him to be extremely devoted, hardworking, professionally inclined, and well suited for the position of

## MIKE BEUERLEIN (from pg 5)

Marine Safety Lieutenant. Mike worked hard to meet the needs of the Division despite its challenges while remaining true to himself and the operation he had given his all to. I have witnessed tremendous growth in Mike, and am certain the skills and capabilities he has developed allowed him to excel as a professional in lifesaving."



Initially working as the Operations Supervisor, now titled Watch Commander, Beuerlein's primary duties were to manage and supervise the daily marine safety operations, a task that he didn't take lightly. He was in a leadership position and set clear expectations. Mike was tough, but he was fair. Managing employees who were more experienced, Beuerlein wasn't afraid to stand his ground and move the operation into a new era of professionalism and accountability. With a strong moral compass and a solid work ethic, he set a positive example as a proven role model.

Beuerlein had a strong foundation for his work ethic and moral character. Throughout his life, Mike's closest advisor and mentor was his father, Al, who retired after serving the City of Los Angeles for 32 years. Retiring at the level of Deputy Police Chief under Darrel Gates and Willie Williams, Al's work experience served as a proven road map for Mike to follow. So with deep respect and admiration, Mike was determined to succeed.

In 1996, Beuerlein's love for sports called him to duty as a color analyst for Orange County High School Football's "Game of the Week". His gift for public speaking was enhanced by his razor-sharp recollection for times, dates, events, numbers, percentages, statistics and facts. Mike's uncanny ability to recite details of past events made him a natural at sports commentating. But he soon learned to apply

his oratory skills to his chosen lifesaving profession.

As a Watch Commander, Lt. Beuerlein knew that his days in the field were behind him. Obviously, office work was simply not as exciting as field work. However, he found a way to channel the experience and excitement of field work. Using his speaking and organizational talents, Beuerlein worked diligently to put others in the spotlight by recognizing them for their achievements. He made the annual Crew Photo Day a ritual to recognize extraordinary rescues or actions by lifeguards from the previous year. And, Mike always went to great lengths to introduce staff members and newly promoted employees with some color commentary from time to time. That extra personal touch that he delivered was well received by staff. Beuerlein was also the point man for recommending employees for department awards and he was a natural to serve as the Marine Safety Public Information Officer.

As an Administrative Lieutenant for 7 years, Mike drew upon his experiences from college and law school. He single handedly drafted the division's 265-page policy and procedures manual which is still used today. Beuerlein encouraged supervisory staff to document employee performances and organized the speedimemo system to help supervisors document and share employee performance which is readily accessible in a file by calendar year. This greatly improved the flow of information and accountability so that supervisors gained knowledge of positive and substandard employee actions. Valuing education, Mike knew that performance documentation helped identify areas for needed training and supplemented the metrics used for annual performance evaluations to improve employee productivity and better serve the community.

Beuerlein believed that if he raised the bar for expectations, then the averages would likely rise to meet the new metrics. He encouraged staff to type their own reports and required evaluations to adhere to a consistent format which included annual goals and progress measures from prior year's goals. Mike's attention to detail and thoroughness was his staple.

## MIKE BEUERLEIN (from pg 6)

Editing reports and performance evaluations, Beuerlein's push for staff to use complete sentences, proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, accuracy, etc., at that time in the 1990s may have been an uncomfortable change for some. However, today these expectations are the norm for supervisors and public safety professionals. Mike is also credited for upgrading the lifeguard promotional process to include supervisor performance ratings combined with oral interview ratings over a system previously based on seniority and popularity.

Moving back to operations as the Watch Commander in 2002, Beuerlein's love for the job, his co-workers and the people he served kept him motivated. But what made Mike so effective as a manager was his ability to build interpersonal relationships. He was always the first to initiate conversations by asking questions and inquiring about one's personal and professional life. Beuerlein's sincerity and genuine curiosity enabled him to be effective, fostering interpersonal relationships while maintaining employee productivity.

Leading marine safety, Beuerlein learned to navigate more challenging communication obstacles. I can recall several situations involving drowning fatalities when Beuerlein, the first point of contact, delicately delivered the tragic news of a lost loved one to a parent. His compassion and sensitivity may have helped ease the pain in an otherwise difficult and unpleasant part of the job.

From the very beginning of his career, Mike recognized the value of volunteerism in lifesaving associations. Learning from his department mentor Bill Richardson, Beuerlein knew that networking with other leaders in the profession would open the doors of knowledge and opportunity. The ability to reach out and build trusted relationships with leaders from other agencies would enable him to gain their respect and confidence as a proven diplomat within the region and national bodies.

The mission of public education and advancing the profession has always been the primary goals of the lifesaving associations. Locally, Beuerlein served as an HBSLSA board member for more than a decade, and also as President, and many other officer and committee positions. Regionally,

he has served on the California Surf Lifesaving Association executive board for nearly 20 years and continues to serve as the President in addition to serving many other positions and committees before that. Nationally, Mike continues to serve on committees and acted as the assistant editor for the *American Lifeguard Magazine*.



"During the 34-plus years I have known Mike," explained Richardson, who was the former USLA President, "I have seen him devote thousands of volunteer hours. He is extremely hardworking and knowledgeable, and has always displayed a high level of professionalism."

Serving as master of ceremony for countless events over the years, Beuerlein has been called upon for a variety of speaking engagements representing the lifeguard department at Project Wipeout, lifesaving seminars, lifesaving functions and competitions, city council presentations, media events, documentaries, etc.

Not only did Mike excel in leadership in the lifesaving associations, his persuasive speaking style was called upon in labor issues and negotiations. As a strong advocate for employee rights and public safety issues, Beuerlein managed to carefully balance union issues, employee safety and rights with city interests and management rights. Working closely with the Marine Safety Management Association, Beuerlein's public speaking and organizational skills were utilized to ultimately save lives by reducing further budget cuts in the lifeguard operations at a time during the Great Recession. Huntington Beach's revived renaissance of coastal hotel development and expansion to promote the city as a world-wide destination attraction, has created a tremendous challenge to provide adequate beach staffing to

**MIKE BEUERLEIN (from pg 6)**

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Marine Safety Division out of a recreation model to a safety model now under the Fire Department. He also served on the Fire Department and Sunset Beach transition teams.

Due to a work-related back injury that prevented him from serving on full duty status for the past 18 months, Beuerlein could have elected to stay home on paid leave. However, due to his strong work ethic and desire to set a positive example to his step son James who is employed as an ocean lifeguard in the department, Mike chose to continue working in an administrative capacity. Unfortunately, Beuerlein has exhausted the timeline for modified duty status and has decided to retire.

Although he will no longer be in uniform, Mike has vowed to continue volunteering his time to promote professional lifesaving standards in our community and around the country. May Beuerlein's legacy and accomplishments continue to serve as motivation for others as he transitions into the next exciting chapter of his life.



SEE YA!

Dear friends, and after thirty years of active involvement with CSLSA / USLA, you are truly some of my best friends in lifesaving, it is now time to say goodbye to the position I've held in the Association for eleven years. I've been overcome by some serious illnesses over the past year or so, but I've tried to keep up because I love and revere the organization so much. I've had so many great times I'll never forget and will remain a member forever. I'm sorry I have no "ready to go" replacement, but I stand ready to assist whoever that will be at anytime; just as I relied on Mike Bartlett when I first took over.

I plan on attending all meetings as before and truly missed Santa Cruz, one of my favorite venues. However, my illness is chronic and has a mind of its own which often figures into my planning. Expect me to be very involved in the Fall meeting which my agency is hosting.

I hold dear my memories and my friendships with all of you. Thanks for your patience, but it's time to move on. Thanks to all.

Richard