

Official Newsletter
of the
California Surf Lifesaving
Association

The CALSURF

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IN THIS ISSUE: PROJECT ECUADOR / NOT ON MY WATCH! / COMPETITION COLUMN



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On the Cover: Lifeguard Mike Tockstein responding to patrons washed off San Pedro Breakwall, Photo by Larry Fukihara - Cabrillo Marine Aquarium

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CAL SURF MAGAZINE

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2012 CALENDAR

4/26-28 USLA Spring Mtg. - Miami
5/21-28 National Beach Safety Week
7/27 Regional JG Championships - Newport
7/28 Regional LG Championships - Newport
8/4 Taplin Relays - Hermosa Beach
8/8-11 National Championships - Cape May
10/11-12 CSLSA Fall Mtg. - Location TBA
10/25-27 USLA Fall Mtg. - Great Lakes TBA
11/4-18 Rescue 2012 - Australia

ARTICLES NEEDED!

Agency Profiles / How to Articles
California Lifeguard History
Junior Lifeguard Stories / Unusual Rescues
Submit online to 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

On Memorial Day weekend, American families lie and tourists enjoy one of our nation's most precious resources: our beautiful beaches. According to the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) over 311 million people visited our beaches in 2010 alone. Because of the importance of American beaches and the dangers of hazards such as rip currents, USLA President Chris Brewster has requested a Presidential Proclamation for National Beach Safety Week, May 21 – May 28, 2012 to highlight the benefits and dangers of our nation's beaches. U.S. Congressman Brian Bilbray has sponsored the request that has been supported by 4 U.S. Senators and 9 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives to date.

As summer kicks off, it is important that we take the opportunity to educate beachgoers on safety. Simple reminders can prevent many of the accidents that occur on beaches each year. In 2010, 127 people died in beach drowning accidents while another 56,799 were rescued by a lifeguard. The objective of National Beach Safety Week is to remind people of precautions their families can take to save lives on our beaches.

Our national beaches represent an important economic and recreational resource for the hundreds of millions of Americans who live, visit, play and work in their vicinity. Highlighting beach safety techniques will ensure that our nation's beaches are a safer and more enjoyable resource for our families. With your help, we can get the word out and ensure a safe summer at our nation's beaches.

In California, *Project Wipeout* has hosted a Lifeguard Symposium and educated the public to save lives and prevent injuries on our beaches for 32 years. Unfortunately, due to the current economy, Hoag Hospital has reduced the program budget. Last Fall, CSLSA was given the unique opportunity to embrace this established public education program. Since then, our Public Education Committee has worked to develop a partnership with Hoag Hospital to continue and improve *Project Wipeout*. CSLSA has committed to

provide technical expertise and staffing, and Ian Burton has volunteered to serve as CSLSA's *Project Wipeout* Coordinator. He has drafted an action plan and will work with Hoag's project Director, Linda Reuter, to plan future events.

Since the Fall 2011 CSLSA Meeting at Bonelli Park, our Executive Board represented CSLSA members at the Fall 2011 USLA Meeting in Maui, Hawaii. At that meeting, Rob Williams was re-elected as USLA Treasurer. As the CSLSA 2010-11 Executive Board term ended, we said a very sincere thank you to our two most tenured CSLSA members who will not be serving during the new term. Bill Richardson and Bob Moore have both served with distinction and, fortunately, remain as CSLSA Committee Chairmen.

At the Fall Meeting, Gus Avila and Mike Silvestri were elected as new CSLSA Executive Board Members for the 2012-13 term. These two gentlemen are no strangers to CSLSA. Both have been heavily involved in leadership roles for many years as active members. They bring a wealth of experience and enthusiasm that will be valuable as our non-profit association moves forward. The 2012-13 CSLSA Executive Board has already met three times this year and will take information from this spring's meeting to represent CSLSA at the Spring 2012 USLA Meeting in Miami, Florida. In addition to significantly reducing Executive Board Meeting costs, the CSLSA Competition, Junior Lifeguard and Public Education Committees have voted to fund their Committee Chair's travel to the Spring 2012 USLA Meeting.

As a progressive organization, CSLSA has established three new committees to correspond with our times and to meet the needs of CSLSA chapters and agencies. I would like to thank Brent Jacobsen (Professional Standards Committee Chairman), Kai Bond (Public Relations Committee Chair) and Tracy Lizotte (Grant Committee Chair) for stepping up for these new positions. In addition, we are hoping to expand the role of the Training Committee to facilitate communication between counties on training exercises, standards and procedures.

On the competition front, we are very excited that, for the first time, the CSLSA Lifeguard and Junior Lifeguard Championships will be hosted by Newport Beach in July of this year. Drafting a CSLSA Life-

[PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE, from page 3]

Lifeguard and Junior Lifeguard Hosting Policy and Procedure was discussed at the Fall 2010 CSLSA Meeting. The purpose is to clarify the expectations of both the host chapter and CSLSA, and to provide financial options for the Host Chapter. A draft Letter of Agreement and bid/application process should be included. A core group of CSLSA Competition and Junior Lifeguard Committee members with knowledge and expertise are needed to work on and finish this very important document.

The CSLSA Executive Board was disappointed that LACOLA's bid to host the 2012 USLA National Lifeguard Championships was not accepted. As a result, Nationals will return to Cape May, New Jersey for the second straight year. Fortunately, the USLA Nationals Re-Organization Committee met in Maui and made progress toward having USLA assume more fiscal responsibility for the national competition. In the meantime, LACOLA is preparing a bid to host Nationals in 2013.

We are pleased that Paul Dunning, the newly appointed Director of US Lifesaving Aid for the International Lifesaving Federation – Americas Region, will join us at our regional meeting and spend a few minutes to inform us about his new position.

If you are interested in getting the latest news about retirement security and joining the effort to protect California's middle class, you may want to check the following website, <http://www.letstalkpensions.com/support>. *Californians for Retirement Security* is a coalition of more than 1.5 million Californians representing public employees and retirees.

Many thanks to the Huntington Beach Surf Lifesaving Association for hosting the Spring 2012 CSLSA Board of Director's Meeting in Surf City. Chris Clarke and crew continue to make difficult tasks look easy. CSLSA is looking for chapters to host future meetings.

Finally, let's hope, that in 2012, our agencies are properly staffed with the lifeguards and resources needed to continue our outstanding safety record of protecting the families that entrust their lives to our care.

Lifeguards for Life!

SAN PEDRO BREAKWATER RESCUE

RICHARD GODINO

On Sunday, February 12, 2012, L.A. City lifeguards at Cabrillo Beach started their regular rescue boat routine at 0900 and were underway before 1000. As part of their patrol, they warned fishermen who were illegally out on the breakwall to head back to safety on the beach. Although the surf was not particularly large that day, the lifeguards watched carefully to make sure the fishermen got safely back on the beach. During the egress, a large rogue wave hit two fishermen and their 6 year old companion. The wave washed them over the edge into the bayside waters between the breakwall and the pier. Lifeguard/deckhand Mike Tockstein responded immediately from the boat while lifeguard Scott Smith responded from the nearest lifeguard tower. The episode was captured on film by Larry Fukihara of the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium who was on the pier at the time. Everyone was saved.



Three fishermen, two adults and six year old, hit by a wave.



The six year old is washed off the breakwall



Lifeguard Mike Tockstein secures the six year old while lifeguard Scott Smith ducks the wave and looks for the other victims

Project Ecuador Final Report

Paul Dunning

One month after the Long Beach Lifeguard Centennial celebration in 2006, John Pearce and I traveled to Playas, Ecuador to enjoy the great surf, warm weather and friendly culture. Shortly thereafter, our international lifeguard program known as Project Ecuador began and transformed into a 5 year mission to help all coastal regions as we expanded from 1 beach to 20 beaches. Volunteer American ocean lifeguards traveled to Ecuador at their own cost to take part in training academies and on the job training during Carnival. Rescues were made and government officials watched and learned that public safety in the aquatic environment is a necessity. I am very pleased to report that a national lifeguard agency has been created and lifeguards will soon be paid in all regions.

On October 25, 2011, the Secretaria Nacional de Gestion de Riesgos (SNR) announced a new program called Project Safe Beaches to institutionalize lifeguards in all coastal Provinces. Rescate Acuatico will oversee the project and has a 2 year, \$400,000 budget for rescue equipment, rescue boats, training and infrastructure development. Rescate Acuatico will certify the lifeguards to be eligible to be hired by the local municipalities. Only certified lifeguards can work on the beach. Municipalities are now required to create a budget for lifeguards and will oversee wage administration.

I am very proud to see our hard work transform into public policy. I am also excited to see the lifeguards we trained receive certification from a government entity (vs. Americans) to validate their ability to meet international standards. Lastly, our grass roots effort to persuade Cities to pay for lifeguards is already in effect in Playas, Montanita, Manta and Esmeraldas allowing for an easy transition to follow the new law. Sustained professional lifeguard operations have been created and the long term outlook is very promising.

We are respectful of Ecuador's sovereign abilities and we have ended the annual Carnival training missions. Future developments may include an EC-USA exchange program. We will remain in close contact with our friends and will be ready to respond if additional help is requested. Product donations continue to flow via the "Long Beach - Manta (Ecuador) Sister Cities" sponsorship as an established

diplomatic channel. Currently, tensions are high between USA and Ecuador leaders which caused interruptions in our project. The shifting political agenda has been very challenging to predict or manage, however the results are conclusive.

Project Ecuador recruited 75 American ocean lifeguards from 14 agencies in California, Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina to take part in the largest ever international outreach program. Six other volunteers also traveled to Ecuador to help for a grand total of 111 individual missions. The volunteers were the key to success and Long Beach Lifeguards represented 23 individual missions, the greatest number by any agency. I am truly thankful for the many donors who made this possible, including the LBLGA and alumni. The \$20,000 in cash donations and \$13,000 in product donations provided the seed capital to save lives and will continue to save lives for years to come. This has been an adventure of a lifetime for myself and everyone involved.

Rescate Acuatico is Ecuador's national lifeguard agency and lifeguards are public safety professionals. Mission Accomplished!

For a complete story line, please visit our blog at <http://www.ecuadorlifeguards.org>



- AMERICAN OCEAN LIFEGUARD AGENCIES, NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL MISSIONS & VOLUNTEERS**
- LONG BEACH LIFEGUARDS 23:** Paul Dunning, John Pearce, Tony Deville, Marc Morimoto, Selby O'Donell, Melco Anderson, Nick Kongden, Tyler Anderson, Jared Vargas, Jeff Williams, Brian Cox, Matt Loney, Chase McGill and Kerry Kemp.
- JACKSONVILLE BEACH, FL LIFEGUARDS 15:** Matt Duffy, Chris Saggus, Casey Donnell, Scott Nagai, James Letts, Mike Schneider, Taylor Anderson, Jill Pouch, Alex Miller op, Duncan Campbell, EB Phillips, Jack Langley, Bruce Meyer, Brian Poirandier, Jason Serpanti.
- LOS ANGELES COUNTY LIFEGUARDS 24:** Richard Straton, Bill White, Bruce Moncrief, Joel Osteen, Julia Galan, Jeff Marinas, Matt Decker, Alison Polito and Randall Friedman.
- SANTA BARBARA LIFEGUARDS 11:** Nave Reyes, James Hildebrand, Scott Devine, Mark Erickson, Lisa Ryan, Rob Harris + 5 Jiff.
- LOS ANGELES CITY LIFEGUARDS 8:** Andrew Williamson, Ricky Franco, Ruben Carreras, Randy Brando and Greg Martinez.
- NEWPORT BEACH LIFEGUARDS 6:** Greg Nadal, Brent Winters, Mike Newmaster, Greg Meyer, Paul Goller, Justin Skagg.
- SAN DIEGO LIFEGUARDS 4:** Don Gilbert, Michel Ericson, Marcos Perceval and Chris Olivas.
- AVILA BEACH LIFEGUARDS 3:** Nick Bryden, Michael Brynneff, Jeff Fessler.
- ROMO BEACH LIFEGUARDS 2:** Negea Gross and Rob McCain.
- CAROLINA BEACH, NORTH CAROLINA LIFEGUARDS 2:** Mike Hudson and Edie Hays.
- CALIFORNIA STATE PARK LIFEGUARDS 3:** Billy James.
- HILTON HEAD, SOUTH CAROLINA LIFEGUARD 1:** Stephen Hogue.
- SAN CLEMENTE LIFEGUARDS 1:** Sean Stauden.
- HUNTINGTON BEACH LIFEGUARDS 1:** Henry Reyes.
- ECUADOR LIFEGUARDS 10:** Gabriela Marín Drake, Miguel Yáñez and Andrea Echeverriá Ferrero.
- PHOTOGRAPHERS & MEDIA, NEW YORK 3:** Eric Linn and Mike Brodsky.
- VOLUNTEERS 6:** Victoria Williamson, Julie Sanchez, Bree Volkmar and Kristin Coats.

A Growing Movement

Morgan McGowan

As lifeguards, we acquire an innate desire to help a person in need. The question becomes who do we serve and why? Many are content by simply serving their local community, working for the all mighty dollar. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that, but for a select few that simply doesn't cut it! Before you ever step foot in a tower, you go through countless hours of training. Every year you decide to stick around, you continue to build your knowledge and skills, so why not share you knowledge with the less fortunate?

Unlike donating money to the charity of your choosing for a tax write-off, when you donate your time and knowledge you know it's making a difference. Maybe that hundred dollars saved a whale, fed a hungry child in Africa for a year, or helped build a house for a low income family, but do you know if it really helped or even reached who you expected it would? For most the answer is no, and that's why we need to find time in our busy schedules to get out and make a difference with our minds, not our check books. Fortunately there are many organizations you can choose from, all of which are looking to make a positive influence in the world, one person at a time. The organization you choose to support does not have to be related to lifesaving, but as a passionate lifeguard I'd like to put the spotlight on a few local lifesaving related charities.

The first is Project Ecuador which was founded in 2006 by Paul Dunning of the Long Beach Lifeguards. Over the past six years, Project Ecuador has sent countless US lifeguards to volunteer over the busy Carnival holiday. Besides saving countless lives, they have also trained enough Ecuadorians to form a national lifeguard agency, Rescate Acuatico. Now that there is a paid lifeguard agency, staffed with competent lifeguards, there is really no longer a need for US volunteers to guard over the busy Carnival holiday. Late last year, Project Ecuador was deemed a success and proclaimed mission accomplished!

Even though Ecuador managed to create a sustainable lifeguard agency, there are many other countries that still need guidance on how to create a sustainable lifesaving system. Fortunately there is another lifeguard

charity that still has active projects going on in a few different countries. The International Surf Lifesaving Association currently has two major missions taking place in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic over Seaman Santa (Easter) 2012. In both countries, volunteers from across the United States will first teach a basic three-day lifeguard academy to approximately forty participants the week before the busy Easter holiday weekend. Volunteers will then follow up and provide more on the job training by lifeguarding side-by-side with the recruits over the holiday weekend. This will be ISLA's fourth mission to Nicaragua and second to the Dominican Republic.

The International Surf Lifesaving Association started with four lifeguards from Huntington Beach in 2008 when they recognized the need for an organization that could utilize the abundant resources and willing volunteers around them, to create a dynamic agency that provided training, medical supplies, disaster relief, and emergency personnel to beaches around the world. The dream of four lifeguards grew into a California Public Benefit Company 501c(3) which works to reduce drownings worldwide by providing resources for ocean-minded educational programs, and through sending volunteer lifeguards to various regions to assist in the lifeguarding and medical response needs of the public.

For more information about the International Surf Lifesaving Association, please visit their website: www.islasurf.org If you'd like learn how Project Ecuador was deemed a success browse over to: www.ecuadorlifeguards.org (see *Project Ecuador - Final Report* page 5) Hopefully this article has inspired you to get out a make a difference!



Graduating Class Dominican Republic Fall 2011

NOT ON MY WATCH!

Michael S. Bartlett

During economic downturns, the private sector typically feels the financial effects before the public sector, which lags by about twelve months. But during the 2009 Great Recession, the public sector cuts came earlier and stayed longer. Most businesses and government agencies have had deep cuts during this unusually prolonged recession, although finally, a gradual recovery seems to be taking hold now. But for many lifeguard operations across the country, the cuts have been painful nevertheless. Despite the improving economy, the public will likely feel the effects of the Great Recession on lifeguard agencies for years to come through reduction of services and training, reductions in hours of operation, increased response times, reductions in staffing and back-up, and in some cases, elimination of service entirely. By eliminating or reducing lifeguard services, the sad reality is the number of deaths by accidental drowning across the nation likely will increase.

As administrators evaluate their budgets and prioritize essential services over non-essential services, many questions come to mind. How do we prioritize the services and determine a risk-reward scenario in which the cuts have the least impact on public safety and quality of life? How do we know if the cuts went too far? What are the impacts of cuts to service and can we really expect that the quality of service will remain high by doing more with less? How will lifeguard operations evolve during this new economy and what can professional lifeguards do to make a difference? And, most importantly, how can we continue to prevent drowning without the necessary resources to get the job done?

Headline Risk

"13 Die in San Diego's Deadliest Mass Drowning". This sad but true story was recently told again by Randy Dotinga who recounted San Diego's worst mass drowning tragedy on the voiceofsandiego.org news website. Today, San Diego has more than 270 professional lifeguards on staff, but on May 5th 1918, it had none, and it paid the price. As a springtime crowd of thousands watched in horror, a reported riptide (known today as a rip current) off Ocean Beach carried 13 men to their deaths.

The shocking death toll from a single afternoon event occurred when a rip current pulled about 75 people out to sea. Sixty people were rescued by volunteer police officers and beach locals who knew how to swim. Thirteen people died in this mass drowning event and within a day the whole nation would soon learn of the rip current dangers off our coast. This panicked beachside merchants who spurred the city to take lifeguarding seriously and spotlighted the dangers that the sea has always posed even to those who only want to take a dip. This national headline news event cast a black eye on San Diego's tourism for years to come.

"What is important to understand is this: The ocean conditions and hazards in 1918 and today are essentially the same, but beach attendance is certainly exponentially greater," said B. Chris Brewster, the former San Diego Chief Lifeguard and President of United States Lifesaving Association. "While some of today's beach going population may be better swimmers, San Diego lifeguards effect thousands of rescues from drowning every year. The lesson of history is that without lifeguards along our coast, the number of drowning deaths annually could be in the scores, if not the hundreds."

Do budget administrators recognize the "headline risk" event of a mass drowning causality that could occur after cutting lifeguard resources in beach communities that thrive on tourism? San Diego's tourism suffered for years before they could demonstrate a commitment to lifesaving and an improved safety record. Today, San Diego's lifeguard agency is a division of the Fire Rescue Department with an outstanding safety record and serves as an international model for many lifeguard agencies around the globe.

Doing More with Less

Over the past several years, with diminishing revenues, many businesses were forced to cut costs and downsize their operations to balance their budgets, similar to cost-cutting measures taken in prior recessions. However, many corporate balance sheets have improved over the last year, boasting more than 2 trillion dollars in cash. Five of the top S&P 500 corporations hold more money than most countries' total Gross Domestic Product, while Apple alone is sitting on almost 100 billion dollars in cash and no debt. Big companies like Cisco, Oracle and Bank of America were able to stabilize their financial losses during the depth of the Great Recession by reducing their workforces. Corporate balance sheets today are now stronger than ever before, but many companies are simply not committed to full time hiring yet.

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Due to this trend, recent statistics have shown that worker productivity has been the highest in years because employees are doing more with less. But at what point does doing more with less have an impact on quality of service?

When it comes to public safety, administering a lifeguard operation similar to that of running a private business isn't exactly the same. Businesses measure success by increasing share owner value; they are profit driven. In contrast, public sector lifeguard operations measure success by preventing accidents and deaths in the beach environment and by enhancing the quality of life for the beach community and visitors -- they are safety driven.

If an agency, for example, uses 10 lifeguards to safely and effectively guard one mile of beach and budget cuts force them to use half the guards for the same mile of beach, is the agency getting more protection with less money? The reality is that five guards would be responsible for doing more with less, although safety and effectiveness of their work would be compromised. The quality of the individual guard's work ethic might not change, but certainly the overall quality of their service would. Considering these comparisons, one can conclude that as lifeguard resources are reduced or eliminated, their ability to deliver quality service will be similarly compromised.

Natural Condition Immunity

When people are injured on public or private property, they often look to sue the property owners to cover their medical care even if they were injured through their own actions. But when someone dies prematurely, surviving family members almost always file a lawsuit looking to place blame on the agency -- the deep pockets. Laws vary from state to state, but let's look at California's "natural condition immunity" protection for public agencies as it relates to beach communities.

In 1984, a swimmer became paralyzed when he broke his neck while bodysurfing in Newport Beach. He sued the city, claiming that the city was responsible for his injury in that the city failed to adequately warn the public of the dangerous conditions. The city argued that they were not responsible because there was an inherent risk associated with a natural condition -- the ocean -- and the actions the swimmer took when he chose to enter the water and ride waves.

After much litigation and many appeals, the city lost and paid \$6 million in damages (*John Taylor v. City of Newport Beach*).

"Jurors found the city should have posted lifeguards and taken greater steps to warn swimmers about hazards from shifting underwater sand bars," reported the LA Times on Jan. 30, 1988.

A key reason for this was a prior appellate court decision involving San Diego that had set a statewide legal precedent. In that case, a court had determined that the California immunity of public entities for injuries related to natural conditions was compromised when San Diego decided to provide lifeguards, post signs, and provide beach maintenance (like trash removal). San Diego elected to pay a rather small judgment in that case to avoid the cost of an appeal. Unfortunately, this caused a very costly precedent for future cases with higher judgments.

The reaction to the Newport Beach case was substantial. Government leaders theorized that they were at greater risk of litigation by providing lifeguards, signs, and services than if they provided none at all. The California Surf Lifesaving Association, along with Chief Brewster at that time, worried that lifeguards would be eliminated to avoid litigation. In response, government organizations and the CSLSA combined to support legislation, which was enacted into law, that specifically states that the natural condition immunity is not compromised by the provision of lifeguards, signs, and services.

In California, beach communities are not required by state law to provide lifeguard protection, and under the natural condition immunity, communities are essentially free to decide to provide any level of lifeguard protection they wish, without substantial fear of litigation in the case of drowning deaths. This lack of a mandate has emboldened budget cutters to again propose eliminating lifeguard protection and to simply let the user be responsible.

Last year, the City of Huntington Beach eliminated lifeguard protection at Dog Beach, a one mile stretch of shoreline north of the Huntington Beach pier. The city posted signs in English warning "No Lifeguards" at Dog Beach, but it may not be entirely protected if someone dies in a rip current there. The Dog Beach shoreline, a litigant might argue, was altered when rocks were dumped over the cliff edge to shore it up and prevent erosion. The Dog Beach area is a popular surfing and dog user-friendly beach with dangerous

Not on My Watch cont'd from page 8

conditions, exposed rocks, sandbars and rip currents altered from its natural condition, yet left unguarded during the peak summer season.

“Although the natural condition immunity was amended to specifically exempt the provision of lifeguards, signs, and services, there are many other steps taken by California communities that could be alleged to change the natural condition,” cited Brewster. “These include sand replenishment, jetties and groins, harbor dredging, and bluff repair. Whether these are used in future civil liability cases remains to be seen.”

Indeed, many beach communities throughout Southern California have altered their shorelines by constructing piers, jetties, rock groins, harbor break walls, etc. Many others like Seal Beach and San Clemente have undertaken major projects to import sand to widen their beaches and shore-up coastal protection to nearby homes. Wider beaches, steeper berms, and shallower sandbars, for example, change the natural condition and, it might be argued, increase hazards that would otherwise not exist. Thus, they have altered the natural condition of the shoreline.

Staying on Top of Your Game

During this challenging fiscal period, now is not the time for complacency in letting your guard down. The pressure is on for all public workers to continue doing more with less and no sector has been immune to cuts. Police and fire services have also felt the budget pinch across the nation as lifeguards have. Safety employees affected by reductions in staffing and resources must recognize the increased importance of situational awareness when responding to calls. With less help and less tools to get the job done, there is more pressure for first responders to get in over their head. Keeping up with your training, practicing your skills, staying in top physical shape are just a few of the basics needed in order to successfully answer the call for help.

Training and skill sets aside, staying on top of your game will be a crucial component in doing more with less for lifeguards and other first responders who are at the center of this crisis. Maintaining a regular physical fitness program, first responders, and especially lifeguards, must be in the best shape possible to answer the call for help. Maintaining this commitment to physical fitness and readiness can best be illustrated by the US

Marine's slogan: “The more you sweat in time of peace, the less you bleed in time of war”.

Lifeguards and other first responders will be doing more with less. So if you're not prepared, you will not be ready, and you may endanger yourself, your teammates and the public you serve.

Under the Gun

Public employees, specifically their pensions, are the target of downsizing and will likely continue to be the target for years to come in this new economy. Everything we do will be scrutinized from the way we look, the things we say, the way we behave, and the way we perform. The public's perception of their servants can't be underestimated. Public servants are constantly in the public eye whether they are teachers or firefighters. Public perception will likely continue to play a crucial role in funding or not funding of services provided.

Lifeguard operations are one public service that is clearly in the public's eye on a daily basis. What the public sees on the beach in one part of the country will likely be the same perception they will have of the entire profession. The lowest common denominator in a lifeguard operation that has low standards and lacks quality could have implications on other lifeguard services. Low standards, poor training, lack of skills, substandard equipment, negative attitudes, inattention to duty, lack of professionalism, or bad management in one area can damage public perception of lifeguards everywhere. We're all in this together as a profession. Lifeguard standardization in training and practices nationally couldn't be more important to ensure that every beach is performing at an acceptable level. It protects us all.

In California, the state budget has been under intense political pressure to cut services and reduce pension obligations. The stakes have never been higher. The disparity between the “haves” and the “have nots” has never been greater. But should the blue-collar unions and employee special interest groups really be taking the blame as a contributing factor in causing the Great Recession? Did the public pensions break the system or was it Wall Street greed with over-leveraged and unregulated financial derivatives that should be held responsible?

In fact, when the private sector was booming, with pay levels soaring, the public sector edged upward, though it always seemed to trail. When the economy crashed

Not on My Watch! Cont'd. From page 9

this time, private sector pay declined and many were laid off. A similar circumstance occurred in the public sector, but as the economy recovers, private sector pay is slowly recovering, while public sector pay and benefits are not expected to recover anywhere near as quickly; and in the case of pensions, perhaps never.

Regardless of the cause, California Gov. Jerry Brown has called for a mix of cuts and increased taxes to balance the budget including a ballot initiative for increasing the state's sales tax. If it doesn't pass, he says that teachers, nurses, state firefighting services and ocean lifeguards are on the chopping block like never before. Increasing class sizes, eliminating social welfare services to the poor, reducing nursing and elderly care, and eliminating State Parks seasonal lifeguards will likely have dire consequences. Essential public services are under the gun.

Protecting the Crown Jewel

Many beach communities like San Diego have come to rely on tourism, much more so than back in 1918. The service economy has become a much bigger economic sector throughout the US, but particularly in tourist based economies. Smaller cities throughout Southern California are no different. In Huntington Beach, more than 12 million people visited the beaches in 2009, and although it costs nothing to use the beach, they pay for parking, buy beach supplies, visit restaurants and stores, and thereby contribute to the local economy. Although beach attendance numbers may fluctuate slightly from year to year, statistical trends over a period of years is clearly on the rise.

To put 12 million people into perspective, if you combine the annual attendance of the Los Angeles Angels Stadium, Knott's Berry Farm theme park in Buena Park, the Orange County Fair and the Anaheim Ducks, the total attendance is about 12 million people. That is a lot of people! In fact, if Huntington Beach were a theme park, it would rank 4th in the nation behind Disney World at 17.2 million, Disneyland at 15.9 and Epcot Center at 11 million. And Huntington Beach is much smaller than San Diego or Los Angeles. Beach tourism is big business for beach communities and certainly "the beach" is the Crown Jewel that attracts visitors to sustain their economies. Inland cities simply do not have this public draw and can't compete with beach communities unless they have a theme park or other major attraction.

Shouldn't protecting the Crown Jewel be a top priority for beach communities?

If a beach community neglects to protect their most valuable asset, they will likely suffer the dire consequences. Having a reputation for a dangerous beach in which tourists are drowning isn't particularly good for business. Year-round lifeguard patrols provide safer beaches for the public in and out of the water. Statistics document that the chance of drowning at a beach protected by USLA affiliated lifeguards is 1 in 18,000,000. One misconception is that lifeguards are only there to serve and protect the swimmers in the water. But in fact, many lifeguards are certified Emergency Medical Technicians like firefighters, and most full-time lifeguards are sworn peace officers. More importantly, the public doesn't become the responsibility of lifeguards when they enter the water; they become their responsibility when they enter the beach park areas. Lifeguards are the first responders to handle 911 calls throughout their beach and coastal jurisdictions. Beach communities with year-round patrol presences clearly benefit as a deterrent for crime, prevent drowning by proactive lifesaving actions, and perform emergency medical care throughout their jurisdictions. Furthermore, their multi-role mandate is: to protect the public they serve; protect the Crown Jewel which is the beach asset (facilities, structures, environment and marine life); and protect the Deep Pockets of their employers from liability derived from injuries, accidents and deaths.

Delivering Quality Service

Public servants by nature genuinely share a desire to be of service to help people. Employment polls and newspaper articles profiling professional teachers, nurses, firefighters, and police officers, reveal these professionals share this common characteristic. The competitive service seeks to hire individuals who share this theme. Those who can articulate this desire to be of service and have the skills to execute this desire to serve effectively likely will be selected to serve.

People who seek public service and who are passionate about what they do aren't particularly satisfied with merely achieving the goal; they strive to excel. Teachers are an excellent example of this philosophy. We all have teachers in mind who inspired us at some point in our lives, and those who did inspire us were likely passionate about teaching.

To attain public safety positions, applicants must com-

Not on My Watch! Cont'd from page 10

To attain public safety positions, applicants must compete in a competitive service. While candidates must possess the minimum qualifications to test, only the highest achievers are selected to protect life, limb and property.

“Most people wouldn’t want a doctor who had a 70% average in school operating on their family member. Likewise, only the finest mental and physical competitors gain employment as lifeguards”, said Michael Beuerlein, President of the California Surf Lifesaving Association. “Safeguarding the public trust, in a dynamic and sometimes hazardous environment, is an awesome responsibility that requires special skills that very few possess.”

When it comes to public safety, the goal isn’t to simply deliver service. Safety service professionals are expected to perform at a higher level. In a moment of inattention, a small error can result in death. The public demands their safety and there is a higher premium paid for this expectation. Clearly those who are passionate about their profession will likely seek to perform at a higher level and deliver “quality” service. If it is your house on fire, your child’s education, or your life on the line, the distinction in the type of service demanded is undeniably for “delivering quality service.”

Moving Forward

Despite the challenges we face, public servants must maintain a positive attitude to get the job done together as a team. As lifeguards, we must work together, share ideas, standardize our profession, and commit to a plan of action to prevent drowning. Don’t let your guard down. Stay ahead of the curve - think ahead, work together, and don’t let a human life slip through your grip. You may not be able to do much to save the public from the Great Recession, but you may be able to make a difference one day at a time and one life at a time. Always keep in mind, NOT ON MY WATCH!

Editor’s Note: Michael S. Bartlett has been employed as a Marine Safety Officer for the City of Huntington Beach since 1992 and serves as the President of the Marine Safety Management Association. He has a Master’s Degree in Business Administration and has been the Managing Editor of the *American Lifeguard Magazine* since 2000.

COMPETITION COLUMN

NOTES FROM THE SPORTS DESK

TIES THAT BIND CRIS DOBROSIELSKI

I recently returned from a trip to Miami Beach, where I proudly watched a fellow former Salisbury Beach Lifeguard and lifelong friend get sworn in as a Judge for the State of Florida. While in the Sun Shine State, I also had the privilege of having a meeting with three-time Olympic Swimming Gold Medalist Rowdy Gaines regarding the central points of my upcoming book, with the goal of adding more perspective, anecdotes and insights from one of the most accomplished athletes on the planet. When the ceremonies and meetings were over I had the luxury of taking in the warm green waters of the south Atlantic and the smooth sprawling sands of some of the finest beaches in Dixie.

With the upcoming CSLA, USLA and ILSA competition season on the horizon, I used my early spring trip as a vehicle to jump start my competition preparation. Each morning started with some combination of soft sand jogging, open water or long course swimming and paddle training around the perfectly positioned buoys that line the southland shores.

Mid-day I transitioned into Cuban coffees, frozen yogurt, and set off exploring and strolling to beat the heat. Linen pants and big sombrero, I was rolling Miami Vice style. I closed out most days with a low intensity sunset training session to add a bit of volume to my training week and then it was on to the other important stuff: reconnecting/rehydrating with old friends, telling stories and creating new memories. The common bond I had with almost all of the people that made my trip so satisfying was formed through time spent protecting the public, competing and riding the high waves coast to coast over the last three decades.

Generosity and good will flowed liberally and abundantly from current Miami Beach, Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood Beach Lifesavers as well as from former

Ties That Bind, cont'd. From page 11

North Atlantic comrades and even from family members of former co-workers. Headquarters, equipment closets, organized practices, homes, refrigerators and hearts were opened up to me and shared generously without measure.

In those moments when I was not training, connecting with old friends or wrestling with my surrogate nieces and nephew (kids of a former guard), I would often sit quietly on the beach to take in the delicious warm winds, reflect and restore. I realized, not for the first time, but perhaps more clearly than ever, just how deep, strong and important the people, experiences, victories and defeats of my lifeguard days are to me and how they've forever shaped my life. They are intricately woven into the fabric of my life and they have, in large part, shaped the compass I use to navigate the world.

“Lifeguards For Life” is not just a slogan; it’s a personal, emotional, if not “spiritual” reality for many of us that have been in the trenches and have had our lives literally in the hands of our workmates or who have pursued common goals and invested hundreds if not thousands of hours to achieve momentary success in competition.



Successful finish at Rescue 2002



Competitors celebrate camaraderie and success

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ATTENTION: LIFEGUARD ARTISTS

The CSLSA and the Membership Committee is offering a **\$250 stipend** for use of original artwork developed by a member. The art will be used on Association T-shirts or other membership items. The artwork should have clean lines and use a maximum of 5 colors, and should be approximately 8 ½ x 11 in size. Any subject matter is welcome, but the ideal artwork will capture the essence of lifeguarding throughout Southern California. Please contact Membership Chair Charlotte Graham at membership@cslsa.org for more information.