

Official Newsletter  
of the  
**California Surf  
Lifesaving  
Association**  
SPRING 2018

The **CALSURF**  
V o l u m e 2 3 N o . 2

**Wieland Shield, Medal of Valor Recipients and more!**



# The Alex Shaner Story...

CA Lifeguard who Survived  
the Tragic Swells of 2017



Photo by Joel Gitelson

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**INSIDE THE CALSURF NEWS**

President’s Message	Page 3
Alex Shaner	Page 4
Medals of Valor	Page 7
Wieland Shield	Page 9

**EVENTS CALENDAR 2018/19**

**Spring CSLSA 2018 Board of Director’s Meeting**  
LA County (Playa Del Rey) April 12-13, 2018

**Spring USLA 2018 Board of Director’s Meeting** Long Beach CA April 26-28, 2018

**Santa Barbara Junior Lifeguard FIESTA Competition**, Santa Barbara. July 20, 2018

**CSLSA 2018 Surf Lifesaving Championships**  
Silver Strand State Beach. July 27-28, 2018

**USLA 2018 National Lifeguard Championships** Virginia Beach, VA. August 8-11, 2018

**Rescue 2018 ILS World Championships**  
Adelaide, So. Australia Nov 16-Dec 2, 2018

**COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Bylaws/Policies & Procedures....Casey Graham  
 Certification.....Vince Lombardi  
 Exchange..... Vincent Fiamengo & Leslie Schwene  
 Grants.....Diego Busatto  
 Junior Lifeguards..Casey Graham & Chris Egan  
 Legislation..... Adam Sandler  
 Sport/Fitness..... Jay Butki & Skip Prosser  
 Membership...Charlotte Graham & Leslie Schwene  
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 Original Founders. Rob McGowan  
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 Special Awards ....Bill Richardson  
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 Statistics.....Ian Burton  
 Training .....Mike Scott  
 Ways and Means...Mark Allen  
 Website.....Bob Moore

Please compare with current meeting agenda on CSLSA website for many new committee chairs.

**THE CALSURF NEWS**

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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Bill Humphreys, President

California Surf Lifesaving Association

It is my honor to be able to serve alongside with all of you as we work to make our beaches and waters safer. As the new president, I want to start off by thanking each of you for your participation in the CSLSA and your dedication to lifesaving. This is a profession I'm extremely proud of and thankful for, in large part due to an opportunity to work with outstanding people such as yourselves.

Our organization is made of lifeguards of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of experience. Despite our differences, we share common values and character traits such as honor, pride, and commitment. And, just like a highly trained team – whether in sports or special operations - every job is important, and every person is vital to achieving the mission.

As we go into our busy season, I want to start with a special thanks to all of the men and women working in lifeguard towers. The tower guard is the backbone of every department. As a tower guard, you carry a tremendous burden. You are asked to watch over crowds which can be in the thousands, prevent them from getting into trouble, and then respond when they do. Often with very little recognition.

Although I may not know you personally, I know what you've been through to get where you are. It is

not easy to become a lifeguard. It takes dedication, commitment, hundreds of hours of training, and tremendous fortitude. Nor is it always easy working as a lifeguard – particularly as a tower guard. You wake up in the morning and prepare for the day, hoping you're packing enough food, water, and sunscreen, wondering what the day will bring, and then dealing with various rules, regulations, and your supervisors! As a tower guard you watch the water for hours with constant pressure and responsibility - knowing what's at stake. You deal with the public who at times can be grumpy and may have a false impression that you are getting paid just to get a tan. And, unfortunately at times it can seem as if that the positive recognition from the public is non-existent, but complaints are common.

The truth is that most people simply don't know the reality of what's going on. They have no idea how much stress you may be facing, what physical discomfort you're going through, or what you've had to see or do earlier in the day. They don't know the training you've been through or what you're doing to keep them and their loved ones safe. Most people don't understand the risks you've taken, or the challenges involved – simply because most don't fully understand the dangers. And unfortunately, it's almost impossible to explain all of this to anyone outside of the profession.

Although many in the public may not fully understand or appreciate all that you do, please know that all of your fellow guards do. From the newest guards to the very experienced ones, we all hold you in high esteem. As a tower lifeguard, you exemplify what the profession is all about. You keep a keen eye out for potential problems and prevent them when possible. When prevention isn't possible, it's your job to put yourself in harm's way to rescue those in trouble – usually being the first one on scene. You focus on prevention and response – which along with proper training – are key components of our profession and this organization. On behalf of the CSLSA, thank you for your dedication, commitment, and service!

I want to conclude by thanking Rob McGowan, Rob Williams and Kai Bond for their service as leaders in this organization for many years. All three have decided to step down from the executive board for this term but have committed to continuing to assist the organization. They will be missed. I also want to thank the prior president, Mike Beuerlein for his eight excellent years of leading the CSLSA. Mike did an outstanding job and kept us on track. He left some large shoes to fill. Luckily for us, Mike is still serving in a leadership role as the Past President on our executive board, so we'll be okay! And, congratulations are in order for Mike as the new Vice President for the USLA. Way to represent Mike!

Finally thank you to the rest of the board members, committee chairs, committee members, and all CSLSA members. We could not continue in our quest to make our beaches safer and improve the profession without your support!

Sincerely, *Bill*

Bill Humphreys

CSLSA President

Chief, San Clemente Lifeguards



*As open-water lifesavers, our **MISSION** is to promote Beach Safety awareness and Professional Lifeguard standards through public education, training programs, exchange programs, junior lifeguard programs, competition and other means. The ultimate goal is to prevent and reduce aquatic injuries, accidents and death at open-water beaches in the Southwest Region of the United States Lifesaving Association.*

## Alex Shaner ...In his own words



My name is Alex Shaner. I am a California State Lifeguard, and this is my story about how I came to experience the other side of a rescue. I was the person being rescued a whose life was saved by my peers and fellow lifeguards in San Diego County.

At age 5 I began swimming on the local swim team and continued through college. Water polo became my focus and I was also fortunate enough to play at the University of the Pacific. Both of these sports were crucial tools for me in becoming a lifeguard and the continuation of my lifeguard career. After college, unsure of what to do, I began visiting my brother (Greg) who was a California State Parks Lifeguard in Santa Cruz. We would longboard



Cowells or Indicators together. He encouraged me to try out to be a seasonal lifeguard, so I began training and familiarizing myself with the ocean. I spent the winter time swimming, body surfing, navigating rip currents and doing run swim

runs at Manresa State Beach.

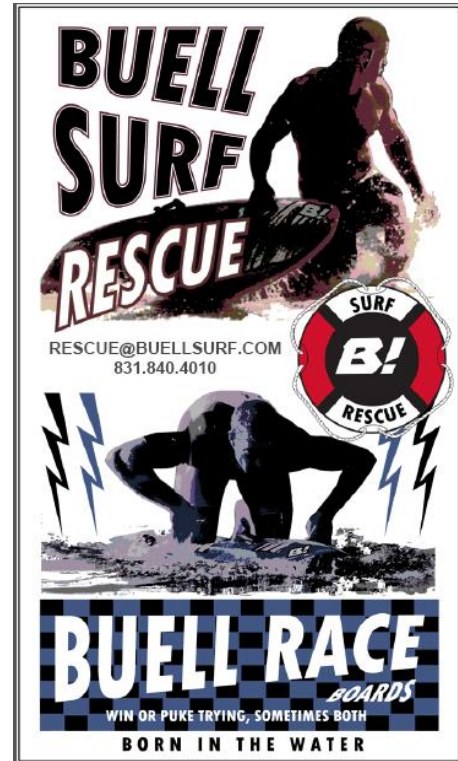
I began my lifeguard career in Santa Cruz, the summer of 2013. The following season I started working year-round both on the beach and at Hollister Hills SVRA. I was promoted at the end of my 3rd summer to LGII. I wrote the seasonal guards schedule and was the secretary and pro-deal accounts manager for the Santa Cruz Lifeguard Association. I participated in numerous body surf competitions in Oceanside and in Santa Cruz. I bodysurfed Ocean Beach in San Francisco as well as The Wedge at Newport Beach. I was able to attend the Secos Classic in the summer of 2016. March of 2017, I transferred to North County San Diego and began working as a LGI. I maxed out my seasonal days in late May and then tried out for the inaugural summer lifeguard program for the City of Carlsbad.

On August 17th while on a PT break, I was bodysurfing, and I cut out the back of the wave and struck the sandbar sideways. I hit my shoulder followed by my head. I was knocked unconscious. I regained consciousness in the water face down, unable to move. I was able to maintain consciousness for a couple minutes before finally blacking out. I was found by members of the public and brought to shore by them, my co-workers and some retired fire professionals.



They gave me a sternum rub and a modified jaw thrust, and I came back to, fully aware of what had

happened to me. I was quickly packaged and transported to Scripps La Jolla where my C4-C6 were fused and spent a week in ICU on an intubation machine, since I was unable to breathe on my own. After intubation was removed, I was breathing on my own and taken out of ICU. By the end of the second week, I had the slightest movement in my left thumb and no other



movement below my injury.

On August 31st, two weeks after my injury, I was transferred to Craig Hospital in Colorado where I began my in-patient rehabilitation. At the beginning, I had no motor movement from the chest down. I had almost no sensation other than some areas of my arms and legs. I could not move any part of my body on my own. I was hoisted from bed to power wheelchair on my first day. By the end of the second week I was operating the power wheelchair with a chin drive (a joystick device that you push with your chin) because my arms and hands couldn't move. The next month was a steady climb in movement of mostly legs and some

movement in my arms. My left side was stronger than my right but lacked sensation. My right hand had sensation but lacked strength. Throughout October and November, I continued to make strides in sitting without support, standing and walking in a harness with partial weight support. My arms also were slowly improving but not as quickly as my legs. All of this movement kept improving with minimal sensation.



My days at Craig were filled with classes about living with a spinal cord injury, learning to live in a wheelchair, physical therapy, occupational therapy and therapeutic recreation. By the time I left in-patient I was walking 200 feet on my own.

I was discharged from in-patient, on November 21st and returned to my parents' home in Northern California for the holidays. I returned back to Craig on January 1st for an intensive rehabilitation program and completed that program on April 4th. I gave up the wheelchair the first week of January. As of right now I'm walking under my own power with no assistive devices. My upper body strength and dexterity have improved by 50% or more. I am able to do a lot of tasks with my hands like typing this article which I could not do 3 months ago. My grip strength is at 50% of an able-bodied person. All of this is still with minimal sensation. I am still in the early stages of my recovery and I anticipate a full recovery. I workout in a regular gym and get laps in at the pool. I will be attempting my first Spartan race this November. I am still working on improving

my independent living skills and I expect to be living on my own in the near future.

I firmly believe that the professional care that my rescuers provided was an integral part in the saving of my life and giving me the best chance in my recovery. I'm filled with positivity for my recovery. I have been overwhelmed by the amount of support I have received from the lifeguard, fire and law enforcement community as well as the surf community. Thank you all! There is much more recovery to come.





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# MEDAL OF VALOR AWARDS

## BOATING ACCIDENT – SALTA VERDE POINT, CATALINA ISLAND, June 25, 2016



### Medals of Valor

- Brian Kari
- Matt Rhodes

### Heroic Act Awards

- Danny Black
- Lance Dempsey
- Rob Pelkey

LACO Rescue Vessels, Baywatch Avalon and Isthmus responded to a call of a boating accident on the seaward side of Catalina Island, at Salt Verde Point. Catalina Conservancy Ranger, Danny Black was also dispatched via vehicle.

While Ocean Lifeguard Specialists Kari and Rhodes worked the debris field in and around the rock reef in over 8-foot surf. Boat Captains Dempsey and Pelkey continued observation and contact with their deckhands, while also searching in and around the debris field under extremely hazardous conditions. Ranger Black located one victim on the beach, treated him for his injuries and later discovered and rescued a second victim trapped inside the upside-down vessel.

Four of the seven victims were saved by those in the water and on the beach, and subsequently transported by helicopter to the hospital where they survived. Three victims were found to be DOA.

## SHARK ATTACK RESCUE – CHURCHES BEACH, APRIL 4, 2017

### Heroic Act Award

- Eric Einertson



Eric Einertson, a non-lifeguard was surfing at an area known as “Churches” in San Diego County when he heard screams for help due to a shark attack. After sending his wife and others in the area to shore, he and another surfer paddled over to the site of the attack and found a female victim being supported by third surfer. Einertson immediately utilized a surf leash as a tourniquet and held the victim on a surfboard until they were brought to an adjacent rock reef. Eric continued to treat and reassure the victim until she was released to paramedics for transport by helicopter to the hospital, where she survived the attack.



**Medal of Valor**

## PWC OPERATOR RESCUE – OCEANSIDE/PENDLETON JETTY, OCTOBER 7, 2017



### Medals of Valor

- Tyson Cleveland
- Victor Dhillon
- Kaipo Kelley
- Emile Lagendijk
- Marko Lagendijk
- Matt Mattison
- Dieter Swank

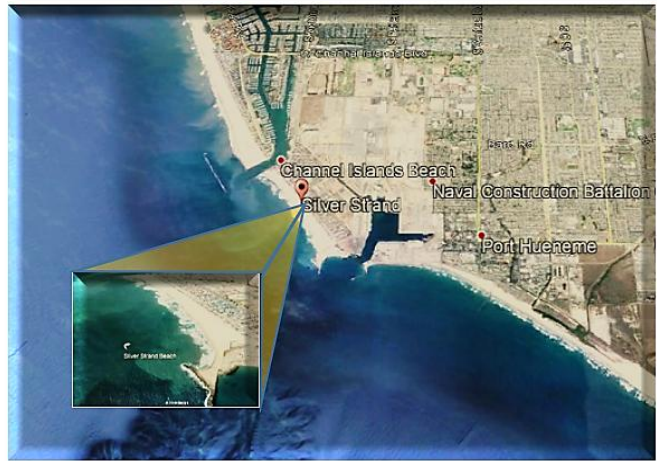
### Heroic Act Awards

- Jonathan Hoover
- Canaan Knapp

Personnel from Ocean-side and Camp Pen-dleton Lifeguard services were dispatched to the Oceanside Jetty for the rescue of a PWC operator who had crashed into the jetty by waves ranging up to 10 feet. The Medal of Valor Awardees are credited with saving the victim, working in the extremely hazardous conditions to rescue and recover him from being stuck in the rocks and pummeled by large waves.

The Heroic Act recipients, were working inside the jetty to provide transport to awaiting helicopter support. They were faced with the over flow of the crashing waves while placing their vessels (a LG PWC and Harbor Patrol Boat) adjacent to the Jetty, to receive the injured victim. The victim survived after several days in the hospital.

## OFF-DUTY SWIMMER RESCUE – SILVER STRAND BEACH, OXNARD, MARCH 16, 2017



### Meritorious Act Award

- John Newton

While surfing at Silver Strand Beach, near Oxnard, off-duty Lifeguard John Newton heard a call for help from some nearby kids. Initially he thought the kids were in trouble, but found them holding a male adult's head above the water. John took charge of the victim and after bringing him to shore, checked





his vitals, and commenced CPR (without protective gear), until arrival of paramedics who continued treatment in route to the hospital. The victim survived after several days in the hospital, having suffered a heart attack.

### Lessons in lifeguarding:

### Southern California first-responders get glimpse into lifesaving an ocean away



Porter Hogan, of Laguna Beach, and Jake Miller, a lifeguard from the South Bay, both wear white caps as they compete during competition against Australian guards. Photo courtesy Ryan Gates/California State Lifeguards

By LAYLAN CONNELLY | lconnelly@scng.com | Orange County Register (reprinted by permission)

Imagine going to the beach and looking up where rip currents are, in real time, on your cellphone. Or being able to know how many beach rescues have been done, up-to-the minute, along the entire California coastline. A handful of Southern California lifeguards got a glimpse into how lifesaving is done on the other side of the world during an exchange program off the Australian coast, learning lessons they hope can be implemented off local waters. “They do such next-level stuff,” said California State Parks educational officer Ryan Gates, who is based out of Crystal Cove State Beach.

“You can see on a computer screen what is happening, when it is happening. There’s value in it. It’s a matter of infrastructure, funding and a lot of groundwork before it happens (here). It’s not something we could do overnight, but it’s something we can look forward to and say, ‘This is the future.’”

Gates was one of 16 lifeguards from Orange County, South Bay and Los Angeles beaches who participated in the exchange program with Victoria lifeguards in Australia, a program that happens every two years.

“We were treated like royalty, everyone knew the Californians were in town,” Gates said. In 2020, local guards will return the favor and host a group from Down Under when they come to California.



South Bay lifeguard Ryan Makuta with a young “nipper,” or junior lifeguard, during a lifeguard exchange program in Victoria, Australia. Photo courtesy Ryan Gates/California State Lifeguards

It was a milestone year for the “Wieland Shield Lifesaving Exchange,” marking 50 years since the program launched. It is thought to be the longest continual beach lifeguard exchange. “I was totally thrilled to be able to go and observe and learn and be a part of this longstanding tradition. ... It’s something I’ve known about but didn’t totally understand,”



Gates said. “I want to pay it forward, so when they come here they are well taken care of like we were. It was very humbling to be asked to be part of the team.”

The local lifeguards spent two weeks earlier this month touring and learning about the lifesaving operations in Victoria, south of Sydney, and participated in competitions held through their stay. They returned Jan. 16. Beaches are patrolled by staff during the weekend, and volunteers made up of local surfers, former lifeguards and overall watermen and women watch the water on weekends.

Los Angeles County lifeguard Jay Butki, who works as a paramedic rescue boat captain on Catalina Island, was one of the travelers well versed in how guards

operate in Australia. He worked as a lifeguard for five summer seasons there and has been on five exchange trips since 1998.

He said one of the big differences there is that lifeguards put up flags early in the morning, marking the safe areas where swimmers are allowed. Here, the practice is to staff lifeguards in towers, and patrol and respond when there’s danger.



Competition is fierce between Australian and California guards, who have long had a rivalry in and out of the water. Photo courtesy Ryan Gates/California State Lifeguards

“We’re kind of land of the free and home of the brave, we put our lifeguard towers wherever the people are,” Butki said. “We have to move the people to the safe areas. There, they determine the safe area in the beginning of the day.”

Response is also different. In California, guards use rescue boats and tubes to respond to water rescues, whereas in Australia, they use paddleboards and zodiac boats as their primary tools.

Public outreach is a priority, and they’ve developed virtual-reality goggles, paired with smartphone apps, to teach people what it’s like to be caught in a rip current and how to escape.

Gates said guards there have heat maps that show where rescues and medical aids are happening, and a digital dispatching system that connects all guards from the state so they can live report rescue statistics as they are happening. In Orange County, beaches are run by multiple agencies — made up of state, local and county guards — who keep separate data and

use different reporting techniques. One of the Los Angeles County guards, Azad Al-Barazi, a two-time Olympic swimmer who competed for Syria, met with refugees from that country about ocean safety. Another guard, Hayden Hemmens from Newport



California and Australian lifeguards come together for a photo on the sand during a recent exchange program. Photo courtesy Ryan Gates/California State Lifeguards

Beach Marine Safety Department, traveled there three months early to train with the locals for ocean competitions. He was a stand out during many of the beach contests, even winning a surf-swim event. Butki said he hopes to see some of the lessons learned applied at local beaches.

It's good to get out of the fishbowl we live and work in and see other ways of doing things," Butki said. "Hopefully we can take back the good and learn and improve the operations where we work, getting a new perspective." local beaches.

**Who got to go on the 25th biannual Wieland Shield lifeguard exchange:**

- Rena Jackson: Cal State Huntington Beach
- Shannon Snell: Cal State Huntington Beach
- Hayden Hemmens: Newport Beach Lifeguards
- Ryan Gates: Cal State Parks, Crystal Cove
- Porter Hogan: Laguna Beach Lifeguards
- Coral Berry: LACoFD, LG Div, Junior Lifeguards
- Kelsey Cummings: LACoFD, LG Div, South Bay

- Jenna Solberg: LACoFD, LG Div, South Bay
- Azad Al-Barazi: LACoFD, LG Div, Venice
- Ryan Bullock: LACoFD, LG Div, South Bay
- Tim Burdiak: LACoFD, LG Div, South Bay
- Ryan Makuta: LACoFD, LG Div, Venice
- Jake Miller: LACoFD, LG Div, South Bay
- Manager: Jay Butki: LACoFD, LG Div, Rescue Boats
- Coach: Joji Abasolo: LACoFD, LG Div, South Bay
- Asst Coach/ Educational Officer: Jeff Hart: LACoFD, LG Div, South Bay"

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## Junior Lifeguard's Corner



### CSLSA Regional Junior Lifeguard Competition

**Friday July 27, 2018** Silver Strand State Beach in San Diego

### USLA National Junior Lifeguard Competition

**Wednesday August 8, 2018** Virginia Beach, VA

## CSLSA Grants for Junior Lifeguard Programs.

Grant Money is available for qualifying Junior Lifeguard programs. See [cslsa.org/juniorguards](http://cslsa.org/juniorguards) for more information.

## 2017 CSLSA Junior Lifeguards of the Year CONGRATULATIONS TO:

- Zenden Berbari (Bolsa Chica State Beach)
- Jeff Ciccarelli (Huntington State Beach)
- Ryan Davis (LA County Lakes)



LACoSLSA



A Quick Look at the

Los Angeles County Surf Life saving  
Association



## LOS ANGELES COUNTY SURF LIFE SAVING ASSOCIATION

### Host of the Spring 2018 CSLSA BOD Meeting

The Los Angeles County Surf Life Saving Association was formed in 2014. LACoSLSA is a registered 501c3 public benefit corporation with a nine-member Board of Directors and approximately 180-200 professional and alumna members annually.

Affiliated Agency: Los Angeles County Fire  
Department – Lifeguard Division

- Governing Body: County of Los Angeles
- Creation: 1914
- Coastline Guarded: 72 Miles
- Permanent Lifeguards: 172
- Seasonal Lifeguards: 580
- Beach Attendance 2017: 63,188, 840
- Rescues 2017: 9,866
- Junior Lifeguards: 4,200 per Summer
- Rescues in 2017: 9866

The Los Angeles County Lifeguards are a division of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. They safeguard 72 miles of coastline and provide paramedic and rescue boat services to Catalina Island. In addition to providing beach safety and emergency medical services, Los Angeles County Lifeguards have specialized training in rescue boat and rescue water craft operations, underwater rescue and recovery, swift water rescue, cliff rescue, marine mammal rescue and marine firefighting. CSLSA Contact: Charlotte Graham

Acting Chief Lifeguard: Fernando Boiteux

For Agency information:  
[www.fire.lacounty.gov/lifeguard/recruitment](http://www.fire.lacounty.gov/lifeguard/recruitment)