

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

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The CALSURF

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Staying Focused!

Photos by Joel Gitelson





MERITORIOUS ACT AWARD



Merrick Vellmure and Jude Young

On Sunday October 15, 2023, at approximately 3:30 PM, Merrick Vellmure and Jude Young were surfing together at St. Ann's Beach in the City of Laguna Beach. They observed a family of three caught in a rip current approximately 150 yards offshore.

Merrick and Jude being members of the Laguna Beach High School Surf Team recognized the danger and acted immediately. They initially tried to direct the family out of the rip current. However, the family continued to struggle in the rip. Using techniques taught to the surf team, they rescued the child. Merrick then went back to assist the mother, while Jude stayed with the child.

A bystander provided Young and Vellmure with two body boards. One was used to provide flotation for the mother and child, while the other was used for the father.

All three victims were safely released to the Laguna Beach Marine Safety personnel who arrived on scene to complete the rescue.

For their decisive actions in recognizing the victims' plight, and their appropriate lifesaving actions, Merrick Vellmure and Jude Young were awarded the California Surf Lifesaving and United States Lifesaving Associations Meritorious Act Awards.



LIFE MEMBER AWARD



The Board of Directors of the California Surf Lifesaving and United States Lifesaving Associations, organizations of lifesavers dedicated to the humanitarian cause of saving lives in the aquatic environment, proudly bestowed the honor of Life Memberships to **Michael Bartlett** and **Rob Williams**, whose service and dedication has greatly contributed to the advancement of water safety and modern lifesaving in California and the United States.



HEROIC ACT AWARD



Shayla Bauer and Jeffrey Weber

While surfing with his friends, Shayla Bauer and Jeffrey Weber, off "Dog Beach" in Huntington Beach, Tuesday, February 16, 2024, Chris Wessels suffered a cardiac episode in the water. With no formal training, Shayla and Jeffrey took lifesaving actions to save Chris' life.

After Chris told his friends he felt lightheaded, he passed out on his surfboard. Shayla and Jeffrey responded quickly stabilizing his head, maintained an airway, and paddled him back to shore. Once on shore, Jeffrey commenced CPR. Shayla found someone with a cell phone and had them call 9-1-1. She returned to assist Jeffrey and another bystander with CPR until the Marine Safety Unit arrived on scene.

After Marine Safety and Fire Paramedics arrived, Shayla and Jeffrey continued to assist Chris and provide a history of the event.

After 45 minutes of CPR, thanks to the combined efforts of Shayla, Jeffrey, First Responder Personnel, and Hospital Staff, Chris' heart began beating on its own. He has since made good progress in his recovery.

For their heroic lifesaving actions, Shayla Bauer and Jeffrey Weber were awarded California Surf Lifesaving and United States Lifesaving Associations Heroic Act Awards.



*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.*



MEDAL OF VALOR AWARD



Ben Sweet

On Thursday, December 28, 2023, the National Weather Service issued an extreme High Surf and Flooding Advisory for the Ventura County area. Due to the extreme conditions, the United States Coast Guard requested all beach portions of the California State Parks within Ventura County to be closed to the public. The Ventura City Pier was also closed to the public due to the large surf and failing structural integrity of the pier.

Lifeguards patrolling the beaches observed a surfer in distress. He was separated from his surfboard about 400 yards offshore. Due to the extreme surf size and extensive debris in the water, lifeguards found it very difficult to maintain visual contact with the victim.

Ben Sweet notified the personnel on the beach he was going on the pier to get a better visual of the victim.

At the end of the pier, Ben observed a male victim struggling in severe distress and calling for help. The victim was moving very quickly with the fast-moving lateral current with accompanying 15-20 foot waves. Ben decided to effect the rescue. He jumped from the pier into an extremely dangerous debris field and large surf. Ben eventually made contact with the victim after swimming nearly a half-mile and secured him in his rescue tube. As Ben began swimming the victim back to shore, they were struck by multiple large waves, which caused them to be separated.

Ben performed a "hasty search" but was unable to locate the victim. The victim was later found to have washed ashore, still secured in the rescue tube a mile down the beach.

Due to Ben's swift and courageous actions, the victim survived the incident.

For his heroic lifesaving actions, Ben Sweet was awarded the California Surf Lifesaving and United States Lifesaving Associations Medal of Valor.

LIFEGUARDS FIRST

FOX AND USLA PARTNER TO RECOGNIZE OPEN-WATER LIFEGUARDS WITH FIRST RESPONDER STATUS

Despite being the first line of defense in life-threatening ocean rescues, most open-water lifeguards in the U.S. are not considered First Responders and are not entitled to the benefits available to police officers, firefighters, and EMTs.

Inspired by the heroic lifeguard characters in the upcoming action-drama series *Rescue: HI-Surf*, premiering on FOX Sunday, September 22, the network and USLA are supporting a campaign aimed at recognizing open-water lifeguards for what they clearly are: First Responders.

SEND A MESSAGE TO CONGRESS NOW!

Lifeguards First By ADAM SANDLER

When the first round of COVID vaccines were being administered, Matthew T. Giachetti was surprised to discover that ocean lifeguards were not eligible to receive the shot.

Giachetti learned that, according to Federal Government guidelines, ocean lifeguards were not given priority to receive the vaccine like other emergency personnel and healthcare workers because they were not considered "First Responders."

As a result, Giachetti, an EMT and ocean lifeguard in Monmouth County, N.J. launched an effort to change the federal status of ocean lifeguards and create a



more level playing field when it came to prioritizing the profession.

Since that revelation, Legislation has been created and now an outreach effort called “Lifeguards First” has begun to gather support to reclassify open-water lifeguards as first responders and emergency response providers (ERP).



The campaign — a joint effort involving Fox Entertainment’s new action series “Rescue: HI-Surf” and the United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) — is designed to raise awareness for House Concurrent Resolution 41, a Bill designed to give open-water lifeguards the same federal designation as police officers, firefighters, and EMTs.

If passed, the resolution would also give lifeguards the ability to deploy alongside their first responder contemporaries in times of crisis. It would also give additional benefits to families of those lifeguards who died in the line of duty.

“Lifeguards First” at its core is an online letter writing campaign designed to provoke a response by Constituents. The public can submit pre-populated emails through the RHSFIRSTRESPONDERS.com website urging their lawmakers to support the Resolution.

The USLA and FOX Entertainment organized an outreach event at the Santa Monica Pier on August 31, to promote the “Lifeguards First” initiative. A display was erected promoting the “Rescue: HI-Surf” television series which debuted on Fox on Sunday, September 22, and aired again on Monday, September 23, in its scheduled time slot.

Brand Ambassadors, dressed in red and yellow t-shirts similar to those worn by the lifeguards depicted in the show, encouraged beachgoers to contact their representatives using iPads and visiting the unique website.

The email is populated with this message:

Open-water lifeguards in the United States are often the first line of defense in life-threatening situations. However, despite being the first on the scene and the first to administer life-saving interventions, most open-water lifeguards in the country aren’t recognized as first responders and aren’t entitled to the same benefits as police officers, firefighters, EMTs and 9-1-1 dispatchers.

Under current federal laws, open-water lifeguards already categorically qualify as first responders (or as many federal agencies call them, Emergency Response Providers, or ERPs). 42 U.S.C. 30FF-133(a) states that emergency response employees are defined by their duties, which include responding and attending to a victim, treating a victim, assisting a victim, and transporting a victim. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 defines the term “first responder” as “individuals who, in the early stages of an incident, are responsible for the protection and preservation of life, property, evidence, and the environment.”

Open-water lifeguards have been performing all of these functions on a daily basis for literally centuries. It’s time to officially recognize open-water lifeguards for what they clearly are: first responders. This is a zero-cost change that will not affect taxpayers.

Thank you for your anticipated signing of Concurrent Resolution 41.

As a reward for sending an email to their designated representative, beachgoers received a free Kona Shave Ice and a sticker for their effort. More than 600 emails were sent by beachgoers to their representatives during the one-day SM Pier event.

Although Concurrent Resolution 41 aims to formally acknowledge the vital role that open-water lifeguards play in emergency response at the federal level, these professionals are acknowledged under various U.S. laws for their essential services, which include responding to, treating, assisting, and transporting victims, often at great personal risk. For example, open-water lifeguards are often cross-trained in emergency medical response, marine fire safety, law enforcement, and water rescue operations, making their role indispensable in emergency management.



Jared Kingsbury

Santa Monica Harbor Patrol Officer Jared Kingsbury, who was on hand at the SM Pier event to answer inquiries from the public about the Resolution and the role of the USLA, is hopeful that Concurrent

Resolution 41 becoming law might sway job seekers into a career in open-water lifeguarding.

“I think ocean lifeguards should have the same recognition as firemen, cops and other emergency responders like EMT’s,” said Jacob Amalfi, a beachgoer visiting Santa Monica, who stopped by the event and sent an email letter to his representative back home in South Carolina. “I am surprised to hear that they do not.”

“Rescue: HI-Surf” is from well-known TV series creators John Wells (“West Wing”/“ER”) and Matt Kester (“Animal Kingdom”). The show stars Robbie Magasiva, Arielle Kebbel, Adam Demos, Kekoa Kekumano, Alex Aiono, and Zoe Cipres.



Cast of “Rescue: HI-Surf”

According to the synopsis for the series, the drama follows the personal and professional lives of Hawaiian lifeguards who patrol and protect the North Shore of O’ahu — the most famous and dangerous stretch of coastline in the world.

Each episode will feature these dedicated, heroic, and adrenaline seeker saving lives in the difficult and often life-threatening conditions of Hawaii’s Seven Mile Miracle, it says.

“As we were developing the marketing campaign around this series, it came to our attention that [open-water] lifeguards are not recognized as first responders at the federal level,” said Annie Geffroy, Executive Director of Events and Strategy for Fox Entertainment. “Fox has a big platform and a big spotlight and we’re putting a lot behind this series. So, we thought why not use some of that for good as well and raise awareness about this issue?”

Giachetti began this effort in early 2021, when lifeguards who frequently deal with emergencies, were not classified as emergency response providers (ERPs) at the federal level, unlike EMTs who were classified as 1A for vaccine priority.

This disparity became more apparent when two N.J. lifeguards died while on duty in August of 2021. Norman Inferrera III’s patrol boat capsized in Cape May, and Keith Pinto was struck by lightning in Berkeley Township. Under current guidelines, neither were eligible for federal line of duty death benefits.

Determined to address this, Giachetti, the founder of LifeForce USA a public safety training agency based in Neptune, N.J., contacted USLA legal advisor John “Chip” More to get support for a campaign to change

the lifeguards' status to more closely reflect their critical role.

Giachetti also contacted U.S. Congressman Chris Smith (R-NJ), a supporter of first responders. A letter was drafted to Rep. Smith on November 12, 2021, from USLA's More, requesting that lifeguards be recognized as they covered the four core tenants of the law: Protect Life, Protect Property, Protect Evidence, and Protect the Environment.

Smith quickly voiced support for the Resolution. "Lifeguards serve as critical first responders when beachgoers find themselves in imminent danger," he said. "Their vigilant watch and quick response to emergencies allow many New Jersey families and visitors to enjoy our beautiful beaches with peace of mind."



Smith introduced House Concurrent Resolution 41 on April 24, 2023 and Giachetti has since been building Congressional support, hoping to secure 20-25 co-sponsors of the Resolution in the House. The Bill has five co-sponsors.

A letter-writing campaign among USLA membership to lawmakers in the Senate and Congress began two months later in June. The endeavor caught the attention of the Newark Star-Ledger newspaper and later, Fox Entertainment.

The grassroots voter outreach phase began in earnest on August 5 on Manasquan Beach, N.J. where Brand Ambassadors with iPads connected to the internet got beachgoers to support emails to their representatives. Voter Voice, a well-known grassroots digital advocacy firm is assisting with the engagement of supporters.

That day, more than 500 e-mails were generated and sent to every elected official in N.J. based on the person's zip code on the form.

The Bill also states that no additional taxpayer money would be required. "Unclaimed Line of Duty death benefits amount to millions of dollars annually. While lifeguard salaries may increase, the overall financial impact is minimal," said Giachetti. (A Concurrent Resolution is not a law. It is a stipulation agreed upon by both Chambers. It is entered into the record after a passing vote by both the House and Senate. It is not signed by the President).

The ultimate goals of these efforts are to:

- Recognize lifeguards as 1B in case of another vaccination/outbreak.
- Make lifeguards eligible for federal Line of Duty death benefits.
- Improve salary negotiation capabilities for lifeguards, who often earn less than fast-food workers despite their critical responsibilities.

Giachetti believes parity would solve several problems. "We have a lifeguard shortage in this country," observes Giachetti. "In Florida, due to budget constraints for lifeguards, you have the single largest number of drowning deaths in history this summer. The amount of training we must go through on the medical side has increased. It used to be 2 1/2 hours, and now it's up to 20-52 hours of training. Our job is to make sure everyone goes home."

He hopes Concurrent Resolution 41 will be passed by the U.S. House and Senate later this year.

To support this resolution, visit RHSFIRSTRESPONDERS.COM and follow the prompts. Your letter of support will be sent directly to your US Congressional representatives.



####

L.A. County Takes Second Place at USLA National Lifeguard Championships



Plus, Cal-State Continues its Decade of Dominance at CSLSA Regionals

By ADAM SANDLER

There may not have been any surf in South Padre Island, Texas, but the L.A. County Surf Lifesaving Association team was making waves at the 2024 Jersey Mike's United States Lifesaving Association National Lifeguard Championships held August 6 through 9, 2024.

The small contingent of L.A. County's finest ocean lifeguard surf racers showed their tenacity throughout the grueling three-day event held on South Padre Island beach by staying within striking distance of the first-place multi-agency team competing under the rubric of Sussex County, until the final tallies.



The L.A. team (LACoSLSA) demonstrated undeniable dominance in the water events, but lost ground during the sand races. The 20-member L.A. team showed its considerable mettle as it consistently gave the 79-member Sussex County squad a run for their money.

But by competition's end, Sussex would out score L.A. by more than 500 points. LACoSLSA earned 952.811 points for second, while Sussex County tallied 1474.001 points for a solid first place. Monmouth County, with 27 competitors, scored 754.500 points to take third.

LACoSLSA team members took home 37 Gold, 14 Silver, and 11 Bronze Medals, which were forged in the shape of Belt Buckles rather than neck-worn medallions, to reflect the Lone Star State location.

Held in the typical oppressive summer Texas heat



with 90 degree land and ocean temperatures, the USLA event hosted over 350 Professional Ocean Lifeguards from across the USA and featured Swim, Board, Surf Ski, Rescue races and relays, as well as Beach Flags and Sand Runs.

LACoSLSA team gold and silver medalists in Rescue Relay Final

Closely tied for second place going into the final day of competition, LACoSLSA was able to advance after some key race first place finishes in the final day of competition. Firsts from Brian Murphy, Holly Maine, Renae Jackson, and a trio of relay event wins solidified its second place finish in the National Championships.



Holly Maine winning board race final

"Our team's performance was impressive. Each of our lifeguard athletes pushed themselves to their limit in the Texas heat as demonstrated by our numerous first place finishes in key races," said Jay Butki, Team Manager of LACoSLSA. "Our second place finish in the National Competition is a testament to the incredible athleticism, grit, and determination of each athlete. We congratulate the Sussex County team on their well-deserved victory and look forward to winning the Howard Lee Trophy next year and keeping it in California."

Holly Maine's trifecta of winning the Surf Race, Board Race, and Ironwoman, while Murphy earned top honors in Board Race and aided by strong finishes in relays, were among the wins that helped propel the team to a solid second place.

"There were definitely a few ups and downs as we were missing Kelsey [Cummings] who is an amazing competitor and teammate," observed Maine. "But I think we all stepped up to close the gap." (Cummings opted to skip USLA Nationals to prepare for the World Lifesaving Championships held in Australia two weeks later).

Maine's Surf Race win surprised many. Maine is an established monster paddler, but the swim race has not typically been her strong suit.

"I spent a lot of time swimming this year, and I had some good swims against Kelsey at some of the California competitions," said Maine. "A lot of people underestimate my swimming ability, so it felt really good to win that [Surf] race."

Maine's Surf Race win may have been impressive, but her Board Race victory was particularly noteworthy as the two events were held around 10 minutes apart.



Holly Maine with Gold Medal for Board Race win

"I was definitely fatigued after the swim," said Maine. "But the Board Race is my favorite and it meant so much to me to win. There were so many amazing competitors at Nationals this year and I knew it was going to be a close race." It was Maine's third consecutive Board Race National Title.

Maine added another first on the final day of competition in the Ironwoman. She described the win as "the cherry on top." Maine said she wanted to win the Board Race and Ironwoman in South Padre and set that as her goal while training for seven months in Australia. "It felt really good knowing that my training paid off and all the sacrifices I made to move across the globe were worth it," she said.

The team also nabbed Gold and Silver in the Rescue Race and took Gold in the Board Relay and Taplin Relay, the latter the final event of the competition.

LACoSLSA's second place overall finish was also buoyed by wins by Jackson, including the Surf Ski Race. She was the team's Open Women's top earner with 82.125 points which tied her for third place overall with Laguna Beach's Claire Kelly.

Maine finished sixth overall among Open Women competitors with 80.250 points.

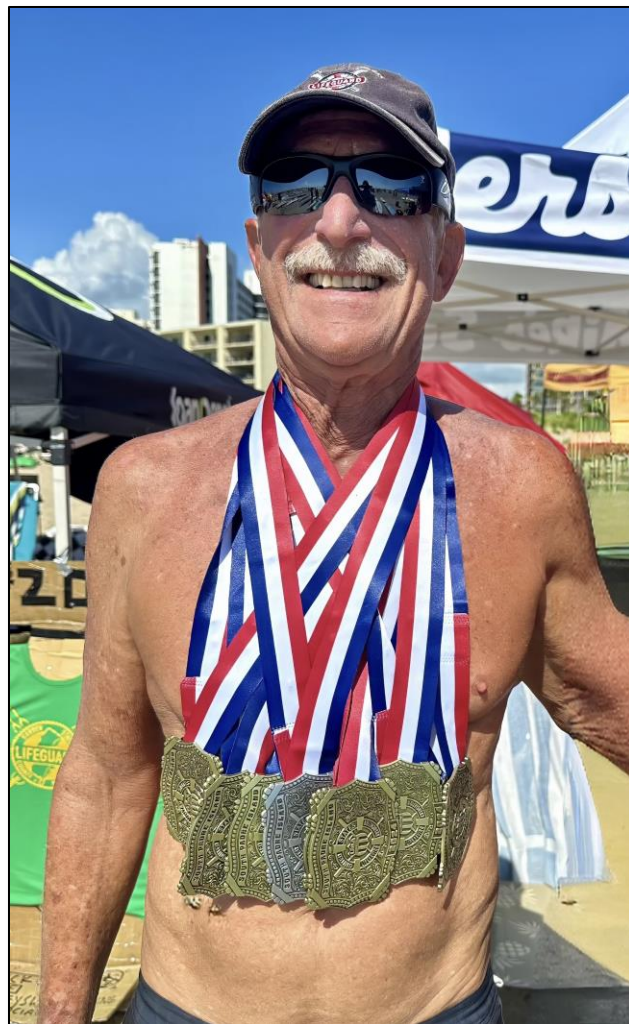
Murphy scored the competition's most Open Men points with 94.500, followed by teammates Alexander Cole with 81.000 points and Lukas Pohlman with 62.750 points to earn fourth and fifth place, respectively.



Brian Murphy winning board race final

Other first place finishes in the Open Men category included Cole grabbing Gold in the Surf Race and the Run-Swim-Run while Cole, Murphy, Pohlman and Malcolm Reid took Gold in the Taplin Relay.

Murphy, Pohlman, and Pat Jacobson nabbed first place in the Board Relay. The L.A. team boasted one-two finishes in the Rescue Race, with Gold going to Cole, Murphy, Hunter Hay, and Stephen Blaauw, and Silver to the team of Reid, Jacobson, Eben Krigger, and Trent Bowles.



Joel Gitelson sporting his medal haul 8 Gold and 1 Silver

In the Open Women category, LACoSLSA nabbed three of the Top-15 points winners. In the Open Men group, it landed five of the Top-15.

On the Women Age Group side, Tandis Morgan was the second highest competitor with 25.000 points, followed by teammate Coral Kemp in 10th with 19.000 points.

LACoSLSA's Joel Gitelson, the event's oldest competitor at age 76, nabbed eight Gold and one Silver awards. He was the points leader in the 75-plus age group and the second highest scorer of all Age Group Men competitors. He scored 41.500 points during his 34th USLA National competition.

California State Lifeguard Association's Dale Adama placed first in the Age Group Men as its highest points winner at 42.500, followed by teammates Patrick Hemmens and Ryan Gates tied at third with 30.000 points, and Phillip Toriello at fifth with 29.000.



At the **California Surf Life Saving Association's (CSLSA) California Lifesaving Championships**, held July 26 and 27 at Dockweiler State Beach in Los Angeles, the California State Lifeguard Association Team continued its decade of dominance by

landing its 11th consecutive win (excluding 2020 when no competition was held due to the COVID-19 shutdown).

The Cal-State team scored 1463.500 points for its first-place finish, followed by LACoSLSA's 1185.250. Rounding out the top-five were Laguna Beach Lifeguard Association in third with 564.750, Santa Barbara Lifeguard Association with 257.125 in fourth and Coronado Beach Lifeguards with 200.500 in fifth.

Top scoring Open Women surf racers were LACoSLSA's Kelsey Cummings with 113.250 points for the top spot, followed by teammates Maine and Jackson with 106.500 and 100.000 points, respectively. Cal-Sate's Brandi White finished fourth with 78.000, and Huntington's Maiken Pardon with 77.375 for fifth.

Maine finished first in the Board Race and Ironwoman events. Cummings nabbed first in Surf Race, and the duo scored first in the Board Rescue and Board Relay events. Jackson scored firsts in American Ironwoman and Surfboat (the latter with Erin Swift). The LACoSLSA women also scored first and fourth in the Taplin Relay.

Top scoring Open Men were Laguna's Porter Hogan landing first with 101.125 points, L.A.'s Brian Murphy in second with 90.750, and teammates Alexander Cole and Lukas Pohlman with 76.500 and 73.500 for third and fourth, respectively. Cal-State's Ben Brewer nabbed fifth with 70.125 points.



Cole scored firsts in the final Surf Race and Run-Swim-Run events, and in Board Rescue with Murphy, who also scored a first in the Ironman event. In the Taplin Relay, the top two spots went to L.A.

Women Age Group points leaders were Cal-State's Ellen Faustine and Emily Hagen with 25.000 and 20.000 points for first and second place, respectively. Carrie Ross of Orange County Lifesaving Association earned 18.000 points for third, while LACoSLSA's Jackson and Kelsey Lynch rounded out the top five with 10.000 and 4.000 points for fourth and fifth places.

Cal-State's Ryan Gates earned top Men's Age Group scorer with 30.000, followed by teammates Mark Allen, Mike Olsberg, Mike Selna, James West, and Laguna's Austin Trinkle in a five-way tie for second place with 23.000 points.

"The Cal-State team had a great racing season. Many new racers got their first taste of competing in the Big Leagues of CSLSA Regionals at Dockweiler," said Team Manager Gates. "Cal State Surf Racing isn't just the athletes on the start line. It includes support from the department and the working lifeguards who allow the racers to take time off to compete. We are looking forward to next year."

####



Judge Irvin Taplin Medley Relay on August 4, 2024, at Hermosa Beach.



The team of L.A. County Ocean Lifeguards dubbed "South Bay 'A'" won the 61st Annual International Surf Festival's Judge Irvin Taplin Medley Relay on August 4, 2024 at Hermosa Beach.

The prestigious event, which started in 1936, boasts ocean lifeguards from L.A. County in addition to agencies from across Southern California. Teams from San Clemente, Laguna Beach, Long Beach and Ventura County also participated this year for the honor to ring the Taplin Bell and have their names engraved on the base of the trophy.

Complete list of winners: surffestival.org.

####



A Quick Look at the San Clemente Surf Lifesaving Association Host of the Fall 2024 CSLSA BOD Meeting

The San Clemente Surf Lifesaving Association (SCSLSA) is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization that seeks to promote beach and ocean safety awareness while maintaining professional open water lifesaving standards.

Affiliated Agencies:

San Clemente City - Marine Safety Division

- **Creation:** 1931
- **Coastline Guarded:** 2 Miles
- **Permanent Lifeguards:** 6
- **Seasonal Lifeguards:** 50
- **Beach Attendance 2023:** 2,544,300
- **Rescues 2023:** 1,208
- **Junior Lifeguards: approx.** 840

San Clemente, also known as the "Spanish Village by the Sea," is a vibrant city in the southernmost part of Orange County with a population of 66,245; San Clemente boasts 2.3 miles of scenic coastal trails and over 20 acres of stunning beaches. The city is also renowned for its world-class surf breaks, attracting visitors from all over the world. The San Clemente Lifeguard Service was established in 1931. The Marine Safety Division comprises six full-time lifeguards and 50 seasonal personnel. It is dedicated to providing public education and swift emergency intervention year-round. During the summer, the division staffs 14 towers, five patrol vehicles, and one RWC. One of San Clemente's most popular programs is the Junior Lifeguard program, which began in 1966 with just 10 participants. Today, the program serves 840 students annually.

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