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**California Surf  
Lifesaving Association**

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*Newsletter Vol. 13 No. 2  
Spring 2009*

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THE  
**Cal Surf**

[www.cslsa.org](http://www.cslsa.org)



The CSLSA Executive Board of Directors for 2008-2009 are listed below:

President	Rob McGowan
Vice President	Charlotte Graham
Secretary	Mike Beuerlein
Treasurer	Rob Williams
Past President/Advisor	Bob Moore
1st Delegate	Jon Mitchell
2nd Delegate	Bill Richardson
3rd Delegate	Reenie Boyer
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*On the cover: Part of California lifeguard contingent in Ecuador. Standing L-R: Rodney Williamson, Bill White, Bridget Srodon, Lee Ryan, Billy Larson, Randy Briseno, Rich Hanna, Scott Devore, James Hatsedakis, Kristina Coutts, Bree Valbuena, Alison Riddle, Mark Morimoto, Matt Shafer, Jeff Williams. Kneeling L-R: John Pearce, Matt Landis, Chase McCall, Brian Cruz, Sean Staudon, Paul Dunning*

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## 2009 CALENDAR

**Malibu Surf & Sport Festival**  
June 20 @ Malibu

**San Clemente Ocean Festival**  
July 18 @ San Clemente

**CSLSA Regional Championships**  
Junior Guards – July 24 @ Seal Beach  
Lifeguards – July 25 @ Seal Beach

**International Surf Festival / Taplin Relays**  
July 31 – August 1 @ Manhattan Beach

**USLA National Championships**  
August 6 – 8 @ Ft. Lauderdale, FL

**Fall CSLSA Meeting**  
October 15 – 16 @ San Diego

## Cal Surf Magazine

Cal Surf News Magazine  
*is the official publication of the*  
**California Surf Lifesaving Association**

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www.CSLSA.org Fax (714) 374-1500

### Executive Board:

Rob McGowan - President  
Charlotte Graham - Vice-President  
Mike Beuerlein - Secretary  
Rob Williams - Treasurer  
Bob Moore - Past President/Advisor  
Jon Mitchell - First Delegate  
Bill Richardson - Second Delegate  
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Richard Godino - Newsletter  
Bill Humphreys - Public Education  
Mike Scott - Training  
Reenie Boyer - Junior Lifeguards  
Robert Moore - Website  
Rob Williams - Ways and Means

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

## ARTICLES NEEDED!

**Agency Profiles / How To Articles**  
**California Lifeguard History**  
**Junior Lifeguard Stories / Unusual Rescues**

Submit online to [newsletter@cslsa.org](mailto:newsletter@cslsa.org)

# President's Message

by Robert McGowan

Here we are well on the way to another summer season. Many of our agencies have already had their tryouts for the summer of 2009. From all reports that I have heard, numbers of applicants for positions have been up, no doubt in part due to the national economic situation. If the beach conditions this spring are any indication, we should be in for a very busy summer. If you have not had your tryouts yet and your information on the website is not up to date, please contact Jon Mitchell, so we can get the correct information onto the CSLSA website.

After several years in the works we finally received our new 501 (c) (3) tax exempt status from the IRS. Many thanks to the members of the California Executive Board and our attorney Ken Bayer for finally bringing this process to a successful conclusion.

Thanks to the efforts of Steve Reuter we had a booth at the recent Action Sports Retailers convention held in San Diego last January. We were able to spread the word about beach safety, made 318 contacts and had some very valuable interactions with members of the surf industry. One of the developments that came out of our participation at the convention was an offer from John Coccozza of Surfshot.com to put our CSLSA Newsletter online at no cost to us. Surfshot is an online surfing magazine that is very well done and would enhance the quality of our newsletter over the current PDF format in which it is currently produced.

This summer will be markedly different from the previous forty-one for me, because this is the first time in my adult life that I won't be donning the red shorts to lifeguard the beaches of Southern California. Since 1968 I have been an ocean lifeguard, the first two years at Huntington City and the rest in Los Angeles County, but I retired from active duty as of March 26. Looking back, I don't think I could have asked for a better career. The people I have met and interacted with over the years have been truly incredible. From my first Junior Lifeguard Instructor, the legendary surfer, Mike Doyle, to the current members of the CSLSA and USLA, I have developed friendships that will last throughout my life. I met my beautiful wife of twenty-two years because of this job. We have had three great boys, two of whom are continuing the McGowan legacy as ocean lifeguards in Southern California. I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to have lived at and worked at the beach all these years. I still plan to remain involved in our associations for at least the near future, and I encourage all of you to stay involved and increase your involvement in the lifesaving movement. We are after all, just one big family! Thank you for all of your support over the years.

Getting down to business, since the CSLSA Board of Directors Meeting in La Jolla last fall, members of your Executive board traveled to Cocoa Beach, Florida to represent you at the USLA National Meeting. At that meeting the National Award for Professional Achievement was awarded to the City of Huntington Beach Marine Safety Division in recognition of their Professional Achievement in improving the professional image of their aquatic safety staff and the profession of lifesaving, thereby maintaining the standard of excellence subscribed to by the United States Lifesaving Association. During the summer of 2007 Huntington Beach Marine Safety was the subject of filming by Evolution Films resulting in the production of "Ocean Force Huntington Beach, OC." This series documented the "Surf City Lifeguards" performing their daily duties in a highly proficient manner, demonstrating a positive representation and professional image of open water lifesaving.

The Educational Conference included presentations about "Pediatric Drowning" by Peter Antevy, MD, "Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. Applications for Ocean Safety Departments" by Peter R. Chambers, PhD, DO, Emergency Medicine Mayo Health, CERF Team, Minnesota Air National Guard, "Florida Red Tide and Human Health: A Beach Conditions Reporting System to Minimize Exposure" by Kate Nierenberg, MS. Mote Marine Laboratory, "The Drowning Problem in Puerto Rico" by Ruperto Chaparro Serrano, Director, University of Puerto Rico Sea Grant College Program (UPRSGCP) /Director, Marine Outreach Program, and "Kiteboarder Rescue" Neil Hutchinson, owner/instructor of Tiki Beach Watersports and Rick Iossi Director of Florida Kitesurfing Association. The kiteboarder rescue lecture was followed up by a demonstration on the beach that I found extremely valuable.

Other significant events that occurred at the meeting included Dr. Peter Wernicki being inducted as a Life Member of the USLA, and the

Heroic Act Award being presented to Amy Di Chiro, a Newport Beach surfing Instructor for her rescue of a nine-year old brother and ten-year old sister caught in a rip current adjacent to the 28th street jetty in west Newport Beach, CA. Amy was there in person to accept her award. There were many other significant events at the meeting, too numerous to mention, but one of the highlights for me was the opportunity to see Kelly Slater surf in person, in two foot Florida slop – he is truly amazing!

We had another well-attended and high energy CSLSA Board of Directors Meeting on April 9th and 10th at Lake Castaic, hosted by John Ragsdale and the L.A. County Lake Lifeguards. The highlight of the meeting was the induction of Reenie Boyer as the newest Life Member of the CSLSA, congratulations Reenie. Other highlights included: Provisional approval of our two newest Chapters, Campus Point and North Island, pending their onsite review. An excellent presentation was made by returning New Zealand exchange guards Kristin Buhagiar from Laguna Beach and Ian Christensen who represented both Long Beach and LACOLA, about their adventures down under. Competition Committee Chair, Jay Butki, reviewed his successful trip to the 3rd International Surf Rescue Challenge in Durban, South Africa. The USLA team placed a very respectable third place, behind Australia and South Africa. He reported that our competitors did very well and gained a great deal of experience and international respect. The Junior Lifeguard Committee reported on upcoming events including our Regionals at Seal Beach, the Cal State Games in Coronado, the Junior Lifeguard of the Year award, and the new "Most Outstanding Junior Lifeguard" perpetual award to be donated by USLA founding father and Life Member Bob Burnside in memory of his son Bobby. The Junior Guard Committee will be judging the entries for the Bumper Sticker Contest at our Fall BOD Meeting, and the tidebooks and stickers that we provide for our junior members were distributed. Our Membership Committee distributed our membership incentives, which included a soft-sided insulated lunch cooler, CSLSA sticker and a reusable sports water bottle, offered in addition to the USLA incentives. They also discussed the logistics of complying with the newly adopted USLA membership year, and presented a no cost benefits program offered by American Income Life. The Public Education Committee distributed 10,000 book covers that were created using the winning artwork from last year's Junior Lifeguard poster contest.

They also updated our Public Education Inventory and Needs Matrix, approved the repair of our Public Education booth (to be funded by the Junior Lifeguard Committee), and suggested possible upgrades to the booth. They also discussed National Beach Safety Week (May 18 – 25). The proposed USLA affiliation with the USOC was discussed in detail on the second day of the meeting. The CSLSA members present agreed that while we continue to support the USOC affiliation proposal in principle, we believe there is no need to rush into changing the USLA Bylaws until all other options have been exhausted. After reviewing an independent analysis of the proposed bylaw changes, undertaken at our request, we believe more research is necessary. The analysis revealed several potential pitfalls and flaws in the current proposals. We would like to see the USOC affiliation proposal referred to an ad hoc committee of qualified people for further investigation of possible alternative means, including the formation of a "USLA Sports Federation," to meet the athlete membership requirement imposed by the Ted Stevens Act.

Upcoming events in our region that you should be aware of include the USLA National Board of Directors Meeting on April 23rd through 25th at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove and the CSLSA Junior Lifeguard and Lifeguard Championships in Seal Beach on July 24th and 25th. Alex Peabody has put a great deal of effort into putting together an outstanding meeting at Asilomar, and if there is any way you can make it, I encourage you to do so. Hope to see you there. If not, I'll see you at Seal Beach for Regionals. We all owe thanks to the Seal Beach crew and Scott Hubbell Productions for supporting another regional championships. The USLA Nationals are scheduled for August 6 – 8 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Remember that we will be electing a new Executive Board of at the Fall 2009 Meeting. If you are interested in running, or know of someone who might be, we'll see you in October.

# Project Ecuador



*Deployment Decision In Peru*



*Carnival Beach*



*Lifeguard Training In Peru*



*Peruvian Lifeguard Tower*

# We Do It Because We Can

Photos Courtesy Cris Dobrosielski



*Regionals 2008 - Open Surf Ski Start*



*Regionals 2008 - Senior Mens Paddleboard*



*San Clemente Paddleboard 2008*

# HELPING OUT IN ECUADOR

Last February, 26 lifeguards from Long Beach, L.A. City, Los Angeles County, San Clemente, Santa Barbara and Cal State traveled to Ecuador to help out during Carnival. During the ten days they were there, they trained and worked with 70 Ecuadorian lifeguards and made or assisted with 332 rescues in the provinces of Guayas and Santa Elena.

What is now known among California lifeguards as "Project Ecuador" is the fruition of an idea that started with two Long Beach lifeguards, Paul Dunning and John Pierce, who were on a surfing vacation during Carnival in 2006 in Playas. What they saw was staggering. 70,000 people on a stretch of beach, half intoxicated, running in and out of the 3 to 6 foot surf, getting sucked out to sea by rip currents, with only a couple of volunteer, untrained lifeguards helping out as best they could. Paul and John helped out and the next year they traveled down again with a couple of their associates from Long Beach, some equipment donations from the Long Beach Lifeguard Association and a plan to recruit, train and equip local lifeguards. They hounded local Ecuadorian government bureaucrats and got them to support their fledgling lifeguard training program.

After returning once more in 2008, they made a pitch at the spring CSLSA meeting, 26 California lifeguards stepped up to help out during Carnival 2009. These lifeguards agreed to volunteer their time, pay their way and bring as much equipment, experience and good will as they could. Two of the local lifeguard associations, Los Angeles City Lifeguard Association and Los Angeles County Lifeguard Association, joined to host a fund raiser at the San Pedro Brewing Company in January which generated \$1100 for the cause.

The California contingent arrived in Guayaquil, Ecuador on February 18, and most had returned home by the first weekend in March, with a bunch of stories and an amazing experience under their belts. They spread themselves out over a 20+ mile section of beaches, from Santa Elena in the north to Libertador in the south, including the beaches of Olon, Montanita, Mangaralto, San Pablo, Punta Carnero and Salinas. While most of the beaches had crowds of 2,000 to 10,000 people, nearly 75,000 people visited Playas, where the surf was generally the largest at 4 to 7 feet. Unfortunately there were two drownings, one occurring when lifeguards were not on duty.

One of the best results of the past two years of California guards helping out is that the local governments are actually supporting a paid lifeguard program. With assistance and training from the California lifeguards, a core group of trained, local professional lifeguards will be

present to keep beach goers safe from now on. And the California lifeguards are already planning the 2010 trip.

*What follows is one of the stories.*

*Editor*

## ECUADOR STORIES

**By Bridget Srodon**

Lifeguarding in Ecuador was a very surreal experience. From the moment we stepped off the plane, it was like something out of a movie. We were immediately greeted by cheering people holding signs, local camera crews, and our bus, complete with military escort. We met the Mayor at dinner that night; as well as representatives from the Board of Tourism and the naval base. The Navy was selected to oversee lifeguard operations.

Our first day was spent training local lifeguards, handing out equipment (which the Ecuadorian lifeguards were beyond stoked to receive), and scouting the beach in Playas (for landmarks, danger spots, currents and conditions). It took a whole day to walk the entire beach. Imagine a stretch of beach with ocean conditions that range from small surf like Cabrillo in the north to huge waves in the south, like Huntington on a big day.

There are 32 lifeguard towers in various stages of disrepair. Most of the towers had no easy way to get to the seat, other than a straight climb. They were essentially useless, except as a lookout. They were too far from the water and too high to exit easily. There is no lifeguard headquarters, except for the naval base at the north end of the beach, which was about 1000 feet from the sand.

There are no rules on the beach. It took awhile to get used to dogs and beer vendors on the beach, boaters in the surfline...and thousands of swimmers blissfully unaware of the potential dangers.

The lifeguards had no real way to communicate, other than visually. We strongly advised them to hold the can up so they can be seen while beating the berm. They have no vehicles or boats and no places to set their things down. They walk up and down the beach from 8 AM – 5 PM carrying everything they need for the day.

The people visiting the beach were similar to beach goers everywhere, but since it was Carnival, and there are no rules, many visitors were getting a little wild. There were a lot of people under the influence and a lot of people enjoying themselves in ways you don't often see on

to page 7...

## Ecuador Stories Cont.

California beaches (without getting into too much detail, some of these things involve paint and flour).

There were also a lot of "banana boats", inflatables pulled behind motor boats. These boats pick up a crowd of people from the beach, hastily throw some PFD's on them, and then dump them out beyond the surf line. These boats were the cause of many rescues.

On the first day of guarding, we worked closely with the Navy, the local police, the Marines, and the Red Cross to establish an incident command system. The American lifeguards and the agencies mentioned. We split up, some to Navy boats and some to quads and hit the sand to back up the Ecuadorian guards. After a drowning in the southern section, it became apparent that this method was not working. We responded to that area and did a line search in brutal surf. After debriefing, we decided to stick to what we knew best.

The next day, all of the American guards (about 20) in the Playas area patrolled the sand, side by side, with the Ecuadorians. We split ourselves into three groups. A few of us, myself included, worked the northern section, where the surf was fairly small, but there were a lot of rocks, and lots of inflatables. Another group of Americans worked the southern section where the surf was the largest and the rips the strongest. The middle section had another contingent of American guards. This section had lots of rips...and the most people, swimming and boating.

It was on this day as I was patrolling the beach with an Ecuadorian guard, making prevents, that we heard a whistle being furiously blown about 500 yards down the beach. We took off and came upon a large group of people.

I asked what was going on. "It's a dead person," I was told. "They pulled him out of the ocean." I pushed through the crowd and came upon one of the Ecuadorian

guards, Jhens, performing CPR. A crowd barely gave us room to work. Everyone was yelling and crying, so loud that I couldn't communicate on the radio. I yelled in Spanish for people to quiet down and let me call for help on the radio. John Pierce was our IC. I let him know that CPR was in progress and we needed back up. I then got down and took over compressions while Jhens continued with rescue breathing. The person we were working on was young; early 20's maybe. He had no breath or pulse. After about two minutes of CPR, he started coughing up a foamy liquid. I remember wishing my Spanish was better as I tried to explain to Jhens that we needed to roll him on his side. We continued CPR until we got a pulse (about a minute later). A doctor arrived with a trauma bag, but there wasn't anything of use in it except a BVM. Since the victim was still unresponsive and only breathing agonally, we bagged him.

The doctor seemed to have no sense of urgency, so I tried to explain to him that we had to get this guy to an ambulance, and quickly. There were no backboards, no suction, no airways...so we just grabbed him and carried him. The crowd helped with this, and we ran with this unconscious, barely breathing body down the beach, to what I thought would be an ambulance. To my surprise, and frustration, we were led to the Red Cross tent. "NO," I explained to the doctor, "we need to get him to a hospital. NOW!" The tent at least had a stretcher, and, after a minute or so of arguing, we picked him up and ran him to a waiting ambulance. Finally.

Jhens and I turned around to a crowd of at least a hundred people, just staring at us. He turned and gave me a high five and we started walking back to the beach. As we walked past the crowd of people, they all started clapping and whistling. Straight out of movie.

*Bridget is a L.A. City lifeguard who works at Cabrillo Beach.*

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## The Californians in Ecuador, Carnival 2009

John Pearce, Long Beach/L.A. County  
Bill White, L.A. County  
Brian Cruz, Long Beach/L.A. County  
Chase McCall, Long Beach  
Matt Landis, Long Beach  
Randy Briseno, L.A. City  
Bridget Srodon, L.A. City  
Paul Dunning, Long Beach  
Rodney Williamson, L.A. City  
Mark Erickson, Santa Barbara

Marc Morimoto, Long Beach  
Matt Shafer, L.A. County  
Sean Stauden, San Clemente  
Jeff Williams, Long Beach  
Alison Riddle, L.A. County  
James Hatsedakis, Santa Barbara  
Lee Ryan, Santa Barbara  
Matt Hayes, Santa Barbara  
Rich Hanna, Santa Barbara  
Rick Hubbard, Santa Barbara

Scott Devore, Santa Barbara  
Billy Larson, Cal State  
Greg Martinez, L.A. City  
Jeff Martinez, L.A. City/L.A. County  
Ricky Franco, L.A. City/L.A. County  
Ruben Carmona, L.A. County/L.A. City  
Kristina Coutts, Volunteer  
Bree Valbuena, Volunteer  
Eric Linn, Filmographer

# WE DO IT BECAUSE WE CAN

## Reflections on the Privilege and Opportunities of Competing

By Cris Dobrosielski CPT, CSCS, CMT

What in the world could possibly be taking so long? These were the exact words that crossed my mind as I was stretching under the shade of an EZ Up canopy before my first 400 meter Individual Medley last fall. It seemed like it was taking forever and I just wanted my event to come and then, hopefully, quickly end. I had looked at the heats and the times and made a pretty good estimate as to when I could hop in the water for my final mini-warm-up and I was sure the meet must be dragging.

I'm not sure if it was the waves of anxiety I experienced thinking about that first 100 meter Butterfly or any of three hundred meters that were to follow but after unsuccessfully trying to relax and stretch and prepare myself for the fast approaching event, I popped to my feet to see what was holding things up.

I scanned the pool and the deck for clues and I quickly noticed something a bit unusual. There was one individual athlete in the far outside lane about to enter the pool. "Strange" I thought. I continued to observe as the lone athlete climbed up cautiously on the starting block with the assistance of what looked like a friend or family member. Watching the athlete ready herself for the starting command I realized what the hold up was.

This brave athlete had no use of her eyes, she was blind. Needless to say I felt foolish for my impatience and self centeredness. Prior to that point all my thoughts that morning were on my events, my races, my goals. Up to that point I was feeling a combination of enthusiasm, pride and healthy fear about swimming the 400 IM, 200IM, 100 IM and a handful full of 50's all in one meet. The magnitude of my personal athletic challenge that day was quickly put into proper scale. The ball dropped, I got it.

My primary goal for signing up for the all those IM'S and showing up at the swim meet at all was to improve my swimming for Surf Life Saving Competitions. I had been feeling a bit tired of giving most everyone a 1- 2 minute head start after the swim leg of the Ironman event and hoped that some consistent off-season master's swim training and racing would bridge the gap a bit. A worthwhile goal with lots of positive consequence for sure, but slim in comparison to ambitious courage and bravery I had the privilege witnessing.

As I continued watching my fellow swimmer athlete go off the blocks, negotiate turns and charge through her race, I realized I had received a few early Christmas presents that day.

- First, the privilege of witnessing real bravery. Not just the obvious physical accomplishment of successfully completing her race that day but even more so all the many challenges and obstacles she must have encountered in her preparation day after day after day. Clearly a person with unwavering determination to pursue her goals.
- The second gift was the example of daring great things. A person's reach should exceed their grasp. A life lived completely inside of one's comfort zone is one short on risk and short on reward. Although I felt real good about my athletic challenge that day, I realized my goals, respectable as they were, were small. I would finish all my races; it was just a matter of how fast and how exhausted I would be later. I was actually risking very little.

- The third and perhaps greatest gift I received watching my fellow athlete embrace her personal challenge was the perspective of gratitude. I realized how I so often take things, People and opportunities for granted. My eyes, my health, my wife (who was there supporting me at that meet, like she does all my competitions) and list goes on. Too many times I focus on the things that aren't right or aren't exactly fare or aren't as I prefer them to be.

What defines us as athletes and as people is how we deal with the things that aren't the way we want them to be. Do we complain, make excuses, and criticize or do we recognize the need for improvement, new ideas and extra effort to make things a little better.

I watched my aquatic comrade complete her event. Every spectator on the deck was on their feet too applauding her accomplishment. She swam and finished like a true champion, that is someone who gives all that they have to give to a noble cause, without guarantee of victory or recognition.

I swam my 400 IM later that morning. It hurt a lot. As did the 200 IM as well as all those pesky 50's. I'm not sure if my winter swim training and racing will actually improve my Ironman swims this summer, I hope so, but I realize it doesn't really matter. The preparation, the camaraderie, the events themselves are opportunities to stretch my limits. Opportunities to say this is my best effort. To step up on to the starting blocks, in a ridiculously small bathing suit and demonstrate my determination and love of sport. I am lucky to have the chance to play. In the end, I race because I can and that's reason enough.

Whether you are at the top of your game and a regular Surf Life Saving Competitor, a competitor of the past or a younger guard who has never participated in a Life Saving Carnival, I highly encourage you to come out to a local race, regionals or maybe even to Nationals this summer. Our sport is like no other. Multiple events, a variety of land and aquatic skills on some of the prettiest beaches in the world.

If you come out and just hop in a run-swim-run or a paddleboard race or a distance beach run you can expect to improve your fitness, stretch your limits and connect with an awesome group of people who are brave enough to step up to the starting line regardless of their finishing place, summer after summer, because they can.

See you on the starting line.

*Cris Dobrosielski was the first and only Junior Lifeguard on the shores of Salisbury State Beach in Massachusetts for 8 years before professionally guarding the same shore for 5 seasons.*

*After Massachusetts, he spent the next 8 seasons guarding in La Jolla, California and helping with The City of San Diego Junior Life Guard Program.*

*He is currently a full time Strength and Conditioning Specialist and has been teaching, coaching and motivating athletes at every level of competition since 1988. You can E-mail Cris at Cris@MonumentalResults.com with comments or questions on this article or any aspect of Surf Lifesaving competition.*

Editor