

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

Spring 2024

# The CALSURF

Volume 29 No. 1

Super-Surf...Weiland ...and Gold!



## 2024-25 EXECUTIVE BOARD

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## EVENTS CALENDAR 2024

### Spring CSLSA Board of Directors Meeting

Dates: April 11th & 12th, 2024.

Location: Capitola CA

### Spring USLA Board of Directors Meeting

Dates: April 24-27, 2024

Location: Pittsburgh, PA (Mid-Atlantic Region)

### Fall CSLSA Board of Directors Meeting

Dates: October 10-11, 2024

Location: San Clemente, CA

### Fall USLA Board of Directors Meeting

Dates: November 7-9, 2024

Location: Oahu, HI (Pacific Islands Region)

### 2024 California Surf Lifesaving Championships

Dates: July 26-27, 2024

Location: (TBA)

### USLA 2024 Jr. Lifeguard/Lifeguard Nationals

Dates: August 6-9, 2024

Location: South Padre Island, TX

## COMMITTEES

Bylaw Committee.....	Bill Richardson & Bob Moore
Certification.....	Vince Lombardi
Exchange.....	Vincent Fiamengo
Fundraising.....	Kelsey Cummings
Grants.....	Nikki Bryant
Junior Lifeguards.....	Casey Graham & Chris Egan
Legislation.....	Adam Sandler
Sport & Fitness.....	Jay Butki & Skip Prosser
Membership.....	Charlotte Graham
Newsletter.....	Jim Hughes
Prof. Standards.....	Sean Cary
Public Education.....	Lola Swank & Devon Beebe
Public Info. Officer...	Adam Sandler
Public Relations.....	Coral Kemp
Social Media.....	Isiah Mullen
Special Awards .....	Bill Richardson & Austin Trinkle
Statistics.....	Ian Burton
Training .....	Nick Giugni
Ways & Means.....	Tony Sholl
Website.....	Skip Prosser

## THE CALSURF NEWS

The  
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On the Cover...

## 2024 California Lifeguard Touring Team Members

### 2024 Super Surf Teams League



*Super Surf Team (with coach Merrill Riley center)*

**Alex Higginson** - San Clemente Marine Safety Division Lifeguard Service

**Claire Kelly** - Laguna Beach Dept. of Marine Safety

**Coral Kemp** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division & Cal State Parks & Laguna Beach

**Holly Maine** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Northern Section

**Brandi White** - Cal. State Parks, Orange Coast District, Crystal Cove

**Stephen Blaauw** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Northern Section

**Matt Holt** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Central Section

**David McKeeman** - Cal. State Parks, San Diego

**Lukas Pohlman** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Southern Section

**Davy Thomas** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Southern Section

**Ben Tran** - LACoFD LG Div., Northern Section & Cal State Parks, Malibu Coast

Manager / Coach: **Merrill Riley** - retired LACoFD LG Division Captain



### 26th Wieland Shield Team



**Kelsey Cummings** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Southern Section  
**Claire Kelly** - Laguna Beach

Dept. of Marine Safety

**Coral Kemp** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division & Cal State Parks & Laguna Beach

**Holly Maine** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Northern Section

**Jenna Solberg** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Southern Section

**Abbey Vince** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division & City of Long Beach

Alternate: **Sae Ackerstein** - Santa Cruz Fire Dept. Marine Safety Division

**Stephen Blaauw** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Northern Section

**Jake Miller** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Southern Section

**Brian Murphy** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Southern Section

**Davy Thomas** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Southern Section

**Ben Tran** - LACoFD LG Div, Northern Section & Cal State Parks, Malibu Coast

**Matt Holt** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Central Section

Manager: **Jay Butki** - retired LACoFD LG Div. Paramedic Rescue Boat Captain

Assistant Manager: **Ryan Gates** - Cal. State Parks, Orange Coast District, Crystal Cove

Coach: **Shane Scoggins** - Cal. State Parks, Channel Coast District, Gaviota

Educational Officer: Captain **Greg Crum** - LACoFD Lifeguard Division, Southern Section



## HEROIC ACT AWARD



Huntington Beach City  
Junior Lifeguard  
Juliana Akoubian

:  
**Juliana Akoubian**

It was a routine day at Huntington City Beach on Monday, July 3, 2023, and for the Huntington Junior Lifeguards an opportunity to test their water skills while bodysurfing. The surf was moderate in size and building with a

mixed swell. The tide had just reached its peak low for the day at 0.48 feet at 3:20 p.m.

At approximately 3:30 p.m., Huntington Beach Junior Lifeguard Instructor Elizabeth "Lizzie" Lovat was training in the surf with her "B" Group of Junior Lifeguards near City Tower Number 7. Lovat took off on a wave in the shore break and was thrown over the falls, striking her head on

the bottom. She stated later that she immediately knew she had broken her neck, as she was face down in the water, her entire body was numb. At that point she was unable to feel or move her arms and legs in order to lift herself out of the water to breathe.

One of Lovat's "B" Junior Lifeguards, 13-year-old Juliana Akoubian, who was bodysurfing nearby Lovat, observed Lizzie lying face down in the shore break and not moving. She immediately made contact with Lovat, and using skills taught in the Junior Guard Program, rolled Lizzie over while protecting her head and neck. She also began yelling for additional help. A nearby Junior Guard Instructor heard Juliana's calls for help, and along with the nearest tower guard, responded to assist Juliana with Lovat. Emergency units responded to the scene along with the Huntington Beach Fire Department's Paramedics and ambulance.

At UC Irvine Hospital it was confirmed that Lovat had indeed fractured her neck and was completely paralyzed from the neck down. Lovat later stated that had Juliana not recognized her plight, and responded appropriately, that she may well have died of drowning from the accident.

Elizabeth has since been through many medical treatments at the UCI hospital, in California. In late August, she was moved to Craig Hospital, in Denver, Colorado, for extensive rehabilitation. During her ongoing rehab procedures, Lizzie's mother, Heather, has provided continuous reports on her condition, citing her excellent progress, and improved functional movement and dexterity. There continues to be a positive outlook for additional improvements.



*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.*

Juliana Akoubian's quick thinking and response resulted in the successful rescue of Lizzie. For her immediate and appropriate lifesaving actions, Huntington Beach City Junior Lifeguard Juliana Akoubian was awarded the California Surf Lifesaving and United States Lifesaving Association's Heroic Act Awards.



Elizabeth "Lizzie" Lovat

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## California Bears Migrate To Australia



By ADAM SANDLER  
 Photos: Ryan Gates, Merril Riley, Nish Paronavitana, Adam Sandler  
 When Stephen Blaauw finished his swim leg, he felt sure that the lead he had created would

be maintained by teammates David McKeeman,



Brian Murphy, David McKeeman, Davy Thomas, Stephen Blaauw, Jake Miller

Davy Thomas, and Brian Murphy and give the California Ocean Lifeguards a memorable victory over the world-famous Bondi Beach Lifeguards.

"We were a solid crew," recalled Blaauw. "David is a really fast runner, and Brian and Davy are extremely fast board paddlers, and Davy and I are fast swimmers, so I knew we had a good chance to win." (Thomas had to swim out to a buoy and be picked up by Murphy in a Board Rescue race format).



The friendly relay race (which also included paddler Jake Miller) was filmed at Bondi Beach for an episode of the "Bondi Rescue" TV show, a very popular docu-series about the well-known Waverly Council professional lifeguards that has aired on Australian 10 for the past 18 years.

And in true cheeky Aussie style, as a trophy for the win, the Bears received a cracked pot with some driftwood, and an eponymous red speedo from the Bondi crew.





David McKeeman

The Bondi match up was part of a life-saving exchange and educational tour to Australia by a California Ocean Lifeguard All-Star

Team comprised of Los Angeles County, California State Parks, Laguna Beach, and San Clemente Lifeguards. The team was dubbed the California Bears.

The Team competed in the 2024 “Super Surf Teams League” surf carnival and the “Wieland Shield,” the latter continuing the longstanding relationship between the L.A. County Lifeguard Assoc. (LACoLA) and Life Saving Victoria (LSV), which began in 1967. The tour was designed as an exchange of lifesaving knowledge, skills, and techniques. Team managers, coaches, and educational officers also accompanied the 24 All-Star Athlete-Ambassadors.

The California Bears’ first stop was Maroubra Beach, where the Surf Life Saving Australia’s “Super Surf Teams League” event was contested. The surf carnival was held January 11, 12, and 13, 2024, and boasted three rounds of races between 15 teams comprised of four male and four female athletes.

Typical surf racing events such as swim, paddleboard, flags, and surf ski were held. Mixed gender relays were also held. The Mixed Ocean M relay was also slated, but increased surf and deteriorating weather conditions forced organizers to return to a Taplin format instead.

The Bears now hold the lofty distinction of being the first international team to compete in the history of the “Super Surf Teams League” event.

Organizers have invited the squad to return next year.

“I was extremely proud of how well we did overall,” said Merrill Riley, the coach/manager of the squad competing in the Surf Teams League. “We knew we probably weren’t going to win, so the goal with each race was always to at least not be last. And we never were.”

Riley noted that McKeeman, of California State Parks San Diego, helped the squad shine with worthy finishes on the sand. McKeeman nabbed a 6<sup>th</sup> place in Beach Flags, a notable feat in such a popular event and one that Australian competitors take very seriously.

And Laguna’s Claire Kelly impressed with her performances in several events, including making it to a final round in the board race. “She was awesome,” said Riley. “She continues to evolve into a great competitor and a great athlete.”



Kelly offered, “It’s a lot of fun. There’s a lot of really good competition and we learned a lot from everyone while having a good time.”

Riley noted that in addition to being formidable competitors, the goal was also for everyone to be positive lifeguard ambassadors, and to enjoy the experience.

Additionally, some observed that the fast-paced event was a change from typical stateside surf racing competitions.

“It’s awesome. The level of competition is so much higher than at home. Everyone is on their A game,” observed Thomas. “It’s really humbling getting out there with some of these guys and getting smoked but learning a lot and having a great time.”

And surf racing relative newcomer Alex Higginson, of San Clemente Marine Safety, whom Riley recruited, “has clearly got the surf racing bug, and had some terrific races.”



Alex Higginson signing autographs

Riley also noted that after a two-hour clinic the team held with a group of Nippers at Maroubra SLSC, Higginson was surrounded by the budding lifesavers who were inspired by her presence and wanted her autograph. “She was there for 45

minutes signing things.”

The California lifeguards tackled the “Super Surf Teams” event as a precursor to the “Wieland Shield” exchange with Life Saving Victoria. In between, some of the Bears also competed in the “Shaw and Partners Manly Open” and the “Freshwater 5000” surf carnivals.

Several of the Bears on the Surf Teams squad doubled as athletes on the Shield team, such as surf racing stalwarts LA’s Coral Kemp, Holly Maine, Stephan Blaauw, Davy Thomas, Ben Tran and Laguna’s Claire Kelly.



The Wieland Shield competition, which was last held in 2018, utilized Ocean Grove Beach for the first day of competition on Jan. 26, and Angelsea Beach for day two on Jan. 27, 2024.

Events included board relay, surf swim, run swim run, surf ski, and Taplin. Competitors recalled that the weather (and ocean) temperature in the 70’s and surf conditions at Ocean Grove were reminiscent of California’s Pismo Beach with small surf and plenty of whitewater, while Angelsea reminded them of Carpinteria with a small sand berm.



“The first day we got off to a good start and we had a win in the surf teams,” recalled LA’s Kelsey Cummings. “The highlight was a dominant win in the surf

rescue relay (the event combined rescue tube and board rescue).”

“On day two the Victorians extended their lead, but we kept it close with wins in the women’s run swim run, board relay, and Taplin,” she said.

The first day of competition ended with Victoria owning just a six-point lead. However, by the event’s conclusion the following day, Victoria increased its lead to 18 points for a final tally of 84 to 66.

“Kelsey, Claire, Coral, and Ben all had great races,” said Wieland Shield team Assistant Manager Ryan Gates. “Ben was a standout; he clearly has been training. And Claire impressed everyone. She was relied upon a lot.”

Kemp recalled, “I was here six years ago for the last Wieland Shield tour. It was the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and one of the best trips of my life. The Victorians are so welcoming and wonderful, and you just learn so much when you are here.”

“The Wieland Shield is more than just a trophy,” said LSV General Manager – Sports Participation Ryan O’Connor. “It’s a symbol of the enduring connection between the Victoria and California lifesaving communities. This international exchange has a long and rich history, and beyond competition, it’s a platform for sharing lifesaving ideas and is a chance to learn and grow together.”

The “American Consul General’s Trophy,” informally called the Wieland Shield, is a perpetual trophy named in 1967 in honor of Mr. William A. Wieland, a U.S. Consul General to Australia who enthusiastically sponsored and encouraged the competitive and educational exchange. The Wieland Shield Tour concept was created by Bob Burnside, then an L.A. County Lifeguard Captain and President of the newly formed Surf Lifesaving Association of America.

The oval shaped trophy is made from Victorian red gum wood with a badge representing the State of Victoria and the insignia of the American Surf Life Saving Association. The trophy is retained by the winning country until the next competition.

It is anticipated the LSV team will travel to the USA to contest The Wieland Shield during the 2025 International Surf Festival in Hermosa Beach, California.

## ***The Poland – California Goodwill Lifeguard Tour***

A common, and indisputable thread among ocean lifeguards is their passion for the job. Long after moving on to other careers, the vast majority of human beings who have spent time working the coastline as a lifeguard cite it as (by far) the *best job they have ever had*. For some, the love of the job comes after they make their first critical rescue. Others are drawn in by the vibrant lifestyle, the unsurpassed working environment, the rewarding sense of community respect, or the universal and gratifying sense of comradery we lifeguards share.

But a precious few individuals were *born to be Ocean Lifeguards*, and in considering the thousands of guards I have trained and worked with in my 40+ year career, there are none which fit that description more than Janusz “Juice” Burda. Born to a lifeguard father, even before he entered kindergarten, Juice was inundated with all things “Lifeguarding” and correspondingly, his passion toward public service blossomed. Focused on California Lifeguarding specifically (which he calls the “Cradle of Lifeguarding”), Juice has become somewhat of an aficionado of our profession and can speak with some authority about all of the various lifeguard operations from Imperial Beach to Humboldt. He has read every book ever published about ocean lifeguarding (including the manuals) and can quote details from each of them chapter and verse. He follows the careers of the various influential lifeguards with a passion others devote to following sports heroes or rock stars. He continually scans the internet to learn about heroic rescues and studies the details of those events to bolster his skills should he ever have to encounter a similar circumstance. He trains with diligence in the





event he might one day be called upon to perform rescues in horrendous or perilous conditions.

Clearly, he was destined to become a California Ocean Lifeguard. Yet, now 26, there was one substantial impediment standing in his way; **he lives in Poland**. For the past few years he has mired himself into the complex and daunting world of securing work visas, travel visas, and even immigrating into the United States. Unfortunately, the current climate in regards to immigration makes it an extremely difficult time to come here to work. Yet, he continues to pad his resume. The moment he turned 16, he became a professional beach lifeguard with *Sopockie Wodne Ochotnicze Pogotowie Ratunkowe* – the best known water rescue agency in Poland. He then went to England and became an ocean lifeguard in Cornwall, promoting to a senior lifeguard position there. He obtained the equivalent of his EMT license as well and worked in the ambulances as well. Yet, his ultimate goal remains the same; he wants to be an *Ocean Lifeguard in California*.

This April, after saving funds for four years (and with the help of a GoFundMe account), Juice will be embarking on a Pilgrimage of sorts to visit all of the Lifeguard Operations on the California Coast. This *unofficial* Lifeguard Exchange will be a dream trip. The goal, of course, is a longshot and he knows it; he wants to somehow



Janusz "Juice" Burda

## watchtower

find a way to get hired. Nonetheless, beginning on April 1<sup>st</sup>, Juice and I will set off on the ultimate California Lifeguard road trip; dubbed: "*The Poland – California Goodwill Lifeguard Tour*," we will be visiting the various lifeguard operations from Baja to Humboldt. If you are interested in following along on our adventure, Juice will be chronicling our trip on his Instagram @LifeguardJuice. If you happen to catch us at your beach, feel free to come out and meet him and share a few of your stories. You can also call me if you can offer a ride-a-long, HQ tour, or anything else of interest. Thanks.

Ed Vodrazka  
(858) 265-8342



North America's Hardest Race on Sand & Water:  
**The California Gold**  
Coming September 21, 2024.

What started with as a visionary conversation over dinner between two California Lifeguards has officially turned into a reality that is impacting the lives of those in our community.



Hosted by lifeguards for lifeguards, The California Gold is the most iconic race of its kind in the United States, consisting of 28 miles of racing in 4 ocean disciplines (swimming, running, prone



*Peyton Ouano from Monmouth County Lifeguards  
(Photo: Bonnie Rogers)*

padding and surfski padding) between the Huntington Beach, Newport Beach and Balboa Piers. The California Gold is also the only downwind surf race of its kind, with water

legs racing downwind and running legs racing upwind. This means, the bigger and windier the conditions get, the faster and more fun the course should be.



*Nate Humbertson from Monmouth County  
(Photo: Keith Lones)*

Inspired by the legacy of Ben Carlson, the 15-year Newport Beach Lifeguard Veteran who heroically gave his life while successfully saving the life of another, The California Gold was created to bring awareness of and promote water safety and drowning prevention programs. This year's event is specifically focused on raising money for junior lifeguard scholarships for low-income kids that wouldn't be able to participate in the program otherwise.

This year will be the 3rd official year of The California Gold and we are excited to now offer 4 separate race categories:



*Ben Tran with LA County Lifeguards paddling in at the HB Pier  
(Photo: Keith Lohnes)*

1. The California Gold Individual Iron
2. The California Gold Relay
3. The Junior Gold Relay
4. The Pier to Pier Surfski / Outrigger Race

This year we are adding in a relay team for junior lifeguards and lifeguards under the age of 18,



“The Junior Gold”, which comprises the same course as the “The California Gold,” only without the surfski leg. Also, brand new to this year's event is a 12 mile outrigger and surfski race from the Newport Beach Pier to the Huntington Beach Pier and back.

The proceeds from the last California Gold event were used to help fund the SoCal Water Safety



Dustin Simis with San Diego City Lifeguards  
Photo: Diana Schwene

Summit (a forum for collaboration on practices, programs, and policy that reduce drowning and aquatic injuries in our community), assist International lifeguard agencies in need of rescue equipment, promote education in water safety programs and also provided funding for Laguna Beach Junior Lifeguard Scholarships (the winning California Gold Lifeguard Relay Team of that year).

Our **Vision** is simple: create an extraordinary event that inspires athletes, supports our community and promotes Water Safety and Drowning Prevention Programs.

Our **Mission** is to raise awareness of drowning while also providing funds to back Drowning Prevention Programs and Junior Lifeguard Scholarships.

This year we are really focusing on the kids...the next generation of leaders that will be raised in our community and watermen that will save lives.

### How Your Lifeguard Agency Can Receive Money...The California Gold Grant:

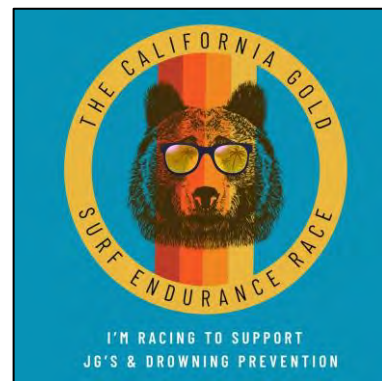
As per our initiative to promote drowning prevention programs, this year we are excited to announce The California Gold Grant.

Each Lifeguard Agency Team or Individual that participates will get 1 raffle ticket and each Junior Lifeguard Team that participates will get 2 raffle tickets. At the after party a drawing will be held in which the lifeguard agency drawn will win the grant money raised from the entry fee profits.



Laguna Beach Lifeguard Winners at the finish line  
Photo: Erik Albertson

Learn more about how you can support us, register to race, volunteer, or donate at [www.the-californiagold.com](http://www.the-californiagold.com).



**Do you have a business interested in supporting the event?** We have sponsorship levels available for virtually any marketing budget. Contact [thecaliforniagold@gmail.com](mailto:thecaliforniagold@gmail.com) to learn more.

**Lifeguard Health Research Study:**



Researchers at UC San Diego have begun work on a project investigating the effect of marine pollution exposure on the health of California lifeguards.

Dr. Peter Lindholm of the UC San Diego Department of Emergency Medicine and MD-PhD student and former Cal State Lifeguard Anna Lussier began their work after a previous project highlighted the impact of contaminated water on health outcomes among military cadets in San Diego. Their new study hopes to understand the exposures that California Lifeguards experience as they make rescues in and around the water, and the potential effects of these exposures may have on Lifeguard health and wellbeing.

All California Lifeguards who are at least 18 years or older are invited to participate, and regional lifeguard leadership is welcome to distribute the below link and/or QR code to their seasonal and permanent guards however they see fit. The survey is anonymous and takes approximately five minutes to complete.

**Study Description for Distribution to California Lifeguards:**

“You are being invited to participate in a research survey regarding your experience with marine pollution as an ocean lifeguard. The survey is being carried out by Peter Lindholm and Anna Lussier from the UCSD Department of Emergency Medicine. The purpose of the study is to assess the health risks of marine pollution among lifeguards. Participation is voluntary and would take no more than 5-10 minutes of your time. If you wish to participate, please click the link below to be redirected to the survey.”

[https://ucsd.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3TWhv48ZU26AQ](https://ucsd.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3TWhv48ZU26AQ)

QR Code to access the UCSD survey:



**A Quick Look at the  
The City of Capitola Lifeguard Service  
Host of the  
Spring 2024 CSLSA BOD Meeting**

The Capitola Beach Lifesaving Association is chartered to safeguard the well-being of the Capitola Lifeguards, promote lifesaving education, and enhance the overall well-being of our community. We are dedicated to fostering a culture of support and empowerment for our lifeguards, ensuring they are equipped with the necessary resources, training, and mental health support to carry out their vital role effectively.

**Affiliated Agency:  
City of Capitola**

- Creation: 2023
- Shoreline Guarded: 1.4 Miles
- Permanent Lifeguards: 1
- Seasonal Lifeguards: 31
- Rescues 2022: 238
- Junior Lifeguards 2022: 990

The Capitola Lifeguard Service’s mission is to diligently promote beach safety awareness and uphold professional lifeguard standards within Capitola as a United States Lifesaving Association certified (USLA) agency. We strive for a secure environment for beachgoers in Capitola, disciplined junior lifeguard initiatives and aim to establish a comprehensive approach to public safety.

**Agency Contact –**  
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