

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 16, 2003
TO: CSLSA Board of Directors
FROM: B. Chris Brewster
SUBJ: Activity Report

I apologize for my inability to attend this Board of Directors meeting. I was asked to speak at the 30th anniversary of the German Lifesaving Federation and felt that my roles as USLA Liaison Officer and President for the Americas Region of the International Life Saving Federation demanded my presence. I look forward to seeing you all at the next CSLSA Board of Directors meeting.

As many of you know, in June I elected to step down as a member of the CSLSA Executive Board after some 15 years of service. It has been my great pleasure to serve you and the members of CSLSA during this period. Be assured that I will continue to advance the cause of lifesavers in every way possible in coming years. This report is primarily intended to update you with respect to some of the projects with which I have been involved over the past six months. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments.

USLA Manual Published

After several years of work, *Open Water Lifesaving — The United States Lifesaving Association Manual*, has been published. While the title has changed a little, this is the second edition of the manual first published in 1995. You will find many improvements and additions, including over 100 additional pages. There are significant updates and, in some cases, corrections. I encourage all agencies to acquire the book and to use it in your training courses. Instructions for ordering, both online and by phone, can be found at www.usla.org.

Educational Adjuncts

A committee is currently working to finalize several adjuncts to the new edition of the manual intended to make it easier for instructors to organize and teach courses consistent with USLA standards. This will include an instructor manual with lesson plans adapted and updated from those first developed for the San Diego Regional Lifeguard Academy, a PowerPoint presentation on CD-ROM, and a test bank based on work initially done by Eric Bauer. This package will be particularly useful for agencies just coming onboard with the USLA program, but should also assist in improving the training programs of agencies with existing programs, as well as colleges seeking to employ a curriculum consistent with USLA standards.

NWS - Sea Grant - USLA Collaboration

In July, I represented USLA at a meeting in Washington, D.C. that has resulted in a proposed tripartite collaboration including the National Weather Service and Sea Grant to educate the public about rip currents. This effort has several elements. NWS is endeavoring to employ some research they have conducted to provide rip current warnings based on atmospheric and other conditions. This has been favorably tested in some areas of the country, but NWS would like to develop a stronger relationship with lifeguard agencies to provide real feedback on the accuracy of these warnings and to learn of ways to improve them. Since NWS predictions are typically parroted by local news media, this should greatly help get out the word about rip currents. The three organizations are already working on standardizing rip current training materials. This is expected to ensure consistency of message among the organizations and to dramatically reduce USLA's costs in producing public education materials. These materials might be co-branded with each of our logos. An improved relationship with the three organizations can be expected to facilitate production and dissemination of public education materials and to solidify USLA's image as an expert in this area.

YMCA - Red Cross - USLA Collaboration

In June, I represented USLA at a meeting in St. Louis, which was proposed by a colleague of Bill Richardson, to strengthen ties among the YMCA, American Red Cross, and USLA aquatic safety programs. While there are several for profit organizations involved in lifeguard training, our three organizations are the best recognized nonprofits. We hope to collaborate on a number of issues, including research into best lifeguard practices. Examples might include techniques for improved vigilance and combating boredom. While our three organizations have maintained a positive relationship for many years, partly due to the fact that we are the three U.S. members of the International Life Saving Federation, this collaborative process is expected to strengthen dialog to our respective betterment.

USLA Website Update

In May, the USLA Board of Directors approved an expenditure for upgrading our website - www.usla.org . The contract went to 906 Interactive, a company headed by California lifeguards who made a presentation at the spring CSLSA Board of Directors meeting. As overseer of the website, I am working with this organization to bring about several significant improvements. This includes a much better statistics gathering and dispensing program, the upgrade of which has been overseen by our hardworking statistics guru - Rick Gould. Regions who desire to do so will be able to input membership data online and members will immediately receive emails when that is done, advising them that they are official USLA members. They'll be able to use those "receipts" pending receipt of their membership cards. The bulletin boards are being upgraded with additional areas, including a separate area for personal sale of lifesaving equipment. Many elements of the website are being designed to allow instant updates of things like agency links, without cost to USLA or a wait for a technician. Overall, you should see a significantly more robust website. Expect a debut in late October or November.

Lifesaving Development

Many of you have followed the saga of drowning deaths at unguarded beaches in the Florida Panhandle. I have been working with Southeast Region representatives to strongly urge the development and enhancement of lifesaving services there. While this is slow and frustrating work, it is yielding gradual benefits. In Okaloosa County, the Public Safety Director is working to create a new lifeguard service in an area that has lacked anything comprehensive. This after Southeast Region President Jim McCrady and I visited the city of Destin and issued a comprehensive report. In Pensacola, a new public safety director has been hired to oversee lifeguards working on Santa Rosa Island. It is hoped that this will lead to an expanded lifeguard protection system that is better trained and equipped. In the end, all of this will hopefully result in bringing the Panhandle up to current lifesaving standards, thus preventing more drownings. It will be awhile though and require continued work.

International Flag Warning Standards

One of the greatest promises of the International Life Saving Federation is establishing international standards for warning signs and flags. We had a breakthrough in May of this year when a draft flag warning standard was published. So far, this standard has been well received. It is expected that the ILS Board of Directors will finalize the standard in February 2004. Thereafter, it is hoped that all countries and organizations, including USLA, will make the relatively minor adjustments required to ensure that warning flags at beaches throughout the world are consistent in appearance and meaning. The ultimate benefit is world water safety. Next step: sign standards.

Rescue 2004

Competitors will be interested to know that plans for Rescue 2004 in Viareggio, Italy, in September of next year are well underway. The website www.rescue2004.com provides details. In addition to the competition, there will be a variety of critical meetings, including the quadrennial ILS General Assembly, to which all ILS member federations are invited. Viareggio is in the Italian province of Tuscany, so there are many opportunities for travel and tourism in this beautiful area at an ideal time of year for weather. I hope to see you there.

Conclusion

As I hope is evident, USLA is moving forward in a number of very positive directions that should benefit our members and our efforts toward drowning prevention. At the same time, we face a rather significant challenge regarding an issue that has caused polarization nationally. In my view, it is in the best interest of all American lifesavers, chapters, and regions to find a way to resolve our concerns amicably and positively. I urge everyone to keep an open mind and to keep their eyes on the prize, which is the continuation of a dream first envisioned by California lifeguards, but now embraced nationally — a strong and vibrant organization that represents us all.

After four years of hard work, Don Rohrer will be stepping down in November. I

intend to run for USLA President. I would of course appreciate your support. I would also appreciate your input and ideas about what I can do to advance USLA even further. I have submitted, under separate cover, some proposals for our future. Have a great meeting!

Lifesaving Aye,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Chris Brewster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

B. Chris Brewster

BCB