

Club Tortuga Update

By Matt Karl, Huntington Beach

On July 12th 2002, a team of 10 junior lifeguards will arrive in Huntington Beach to begin a 2-week exchange representing their home of Puerto Escondido, Oaxaca, Mexico. A similar exchange with Puerto Escondido's senior lifeguard staff 6 years ago has helped to achieve the goal of overcoming government oversight and funding of lifeguards in the State of Oaxaca. With more stability and money, Puerto Escondido was able to start a Junior Lifeguard program, which is now a model for others in the region. Much like the early days of Junior Lifeguards in California, programs in Mexico are growing rapidly and gaining supporters from the communities they serve. We hope that the upcoming visit will provide motivation and education for participants on both sides of the border.

As the Puerto team prepares for this inaugural exchange, they are both excited and nervous. For most of them, this will be the first time out of Mexico, and according to Lifeguard Captain Godofredo Vasquez, "they are worried about their English, being away from their families and most of all, the cold water." They are looking forward to seeing the United States and meeting new friends who share the same interests. They have all worked very hard in obtaining visas, passports and funds for the trip. Each of them has learned a great deal already." Said Vasquez.

Individual team members will stay with the families of junior guards from Huntington and Laguna beaches. This will give each of the 7 girls and 3 boys the opportunity to become a part of their American host's family and learn more than they would staying together as a group. Both agencies have a number of events planned including welcome parties, the regional competition and a trip to Disneyland. Most days will be spent running, swimming and playing on the beach, the favorite activities of Junior Lifeguards everywhere.

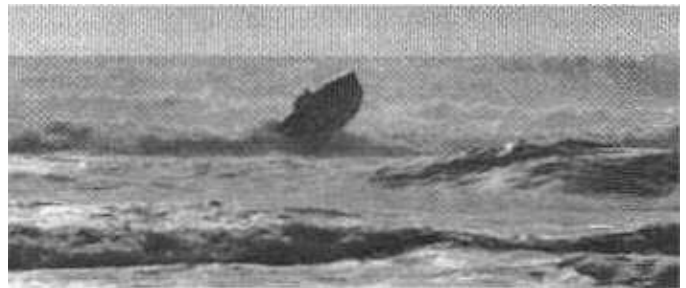
*For follow-up information on this exchange or questions regarding Club Tortuga, please contact: Matt Karl
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New Zealand Exchange Photos



From left to right: Dean Storey, Casey Graham, Gennifer Amthor, Tyler Morgan, Brian Kerry, Lindsay Ortega.



A typical day – Kiwi I.R.B. Training in the Tasman Sea.



Leaping into Summer – A Newport Beach Junior Lifeguard takes the plunge off of the Balboa Pier. Newport Beach's commitment to making each summer memorable for every one of its 1200 Junior guards is evident in the creative training and competition events that it offers. From mock-rescues to pier jumps and boat orientations, the Jr. Lifeguards get a firsthand look at what it takes to keep over 10 million visitors to Newport Beach safe every year. Photo by Eric Wayman.