

American

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LIFEGUARD®

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We are America's nonprofit, professional association of beach lifeguards and open water rescuers. The USLA works to reduce the incidence of death and injury in the aquatic environment through public education, national lifeguard standards, training programs, promotion of high levels of lifeguard readiness, and other means. Corporate address: 1968 S. Coast Highway, #740, Laguna Beach, California 92651.

American Lifeguard Magazine™

American Lifeguard Magazine™ is the official magazine of the USLA, mailed March 1, June 1, and October 15 to about 7,000 members and subscribers. The opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the USLA. We welcome stories, photos, and advertising which target our audience of athletic, beach oriented people. Our junior lifeguard members range in age from 8 - 18, with an average age of 12. They are about 55% male, 45% female. Our lifeguard members (professional, alumnus, and life) range in age from 16 to over 85, with an average age of 29. They are about 75% male, 25% female. Readers include lifeguard agency chiefs, junior lifeguard program administrators, and others involved in purchasing decisions. Promote your products and services by delivering your message directly to lifesaving professionals through the only magazine targeting beach lifeguards in the US. We rarely pay for articles or photos, but give full credit. We pay \$100 for cover photos.

Deadlines for contributing stories, photos, or advertising to ALM are March 1 (summer edition), July 15 (fall edition), and December 1 (spring edition), unless a later date is approved by the editor.

Address all inquiries to the editor at: alm@usla.org.

Ad Size Only	One Issue	Three Issues – When Paid in Advance.
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Do you have a story or a photo you'd like to contribute?
Contact the editor at: alm@usla.org.



Cover Shot: *Lightning at the Magical Green Lifeguard Tower, Siesta Key Beach, Sarasota, Florida, August 26, 2021. Photographer: Dylan Jon Wade Cox, www.djwphoto.com.*

TEXAS TRAGEDY PROMPTS LIFEGUARD LEGISLATION

Peter Davis

On April 11th, 2019, Je'Sani Smith went for a swim at White Cap Beach, Texas and didn't make it back to shore. He died as a result of a rip current, with no lifeguards immediately present in the area.

As is the case with many drowning fatalities around the country, his family wanted to do what they could to ensure that the chances of this happening to someone else were greatly reduced. Je'Sani's mom, Kiwana Denson, formed a foundation in his honor called the Je'Sani Smith Foundation www.jesani-smithfoundation.org and www.beach-safely.org with the mission to reduce open water drownings.

Kiwana is an energetic, sharp, and motivated woman who in a short time has been very effective. She quickly realized after contacting USLA representatives on the Gulf Coast that it is important to use established messaging for public education, so her foundation doesn't send mixed messages to the public.

She has been using the robust public education information provided by the United States Lifesaving Association as well as the USLA/NOAA rip current materials, all of which can be found at www.usla.org. She is especially excited about the recently released USLA/NOAA Rip Current Education Toolkit.

Probably the most significant accomplishment which has come of this to date was legislation authored by State Representative Todd Hunter. House Bill 3807, also known as the Je'Sani Smith Act, was passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor in 2021. It requires the addition of signage and lifeguards at every structure along the Texas coast during summer months.

The bill, which was passed into law, begins with verbiage beach lifeguards are all too familiar with. "Rip currents naturally occur by rocky formations, piers, and jetties. Increasing awareness of natural conditions that pose a significant risk on Texas beaches, such as rip currents, is a critical element to improving public safety. Recognizing and being prepared for rip currents and other hazards may save lives."

Ms. Denson states, "Increased signage and lifeguards will provide more exposure to the dangers of these fast-moving channels of water that can carry people away from the shore. Without it, many swimmers end up trying to swim against the current towards the beach and exhaust themselves before ultimately drowning, just like Je'Sani."

"I often wonder," she says, "if only there were visible signs and lifeguards near the jetties that day, would Je'Sani be alive, or his body recovered sooner? A thought that rumors my imagination 1000 times over. Having lifeguards readily available near piers, jetties, and other areas that commonly have rip currents would provide preventive actions and immediate rescue response, which could increase chances of a safe rescue and survival."

A second piece of legislation was passed called House Concurrent Legislation 46 which designates the month of April as water safety month in the state of Texas for a 10-year period.

"This House current resolution is a steppingstone," according to Ms. Denson, "to start the discussion of beach safety and rip current awareness and education. I quickly realized my son's tragedy was not unique at all. That same year, multiple open water fatalities in Nueces County continued over the next few months. And I knew then, something had to be done. These tragedies are preventable through consistent and ongoing beach safety efforts across this Great State of Texas."

Both pieces of legislation are a tremendous step forward for Texas beach safety. There are many areas of the coast that have structures but no existing lifeguard programs. Other areas, such as Galveston, Port Aransas, and South Padre have well developed United States Lifesaving Association (USLA) certified agencies that will be able, with a bit of effort, to meet the new requirements. These lifeguard services and the corresponding USLA chapters can be a resource for new programs that will need to be put in place by the 2022 summer season.

The USLA has arranged for deep discounts and special deals with leading companies that offer products of value to USLA members. Visit the USLA Home page (at the bottom) or the USLA Store, at: www.usla.org/store

Example discounts available to you:

- **25–50% off Hobie polarized sunglasses**
(including special deals on prescription sunglasses)
- **\$30 off DaFin swim fins**
- **Access to thousands of deals on BenefitHub**

And you can purchase rings with the USLA logo from Jostens.

The USLA is committed to helping lifeguards get the best equipment at the best prices. Don't forget to sign up for your membership today through your chapter or at: www.usla.org

