



House of the week

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Adm. Allen to speak in MAC series

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'It's been a family thing my whole life. My dad was a lifeguard, my brother and my sister were lifeguards, my aunts and uncles and cousins were all guards, so I always was around it. My mom loves it because I have like 60 brothers and sisters. We have an awesome group of people and our whole entire beach patrol is like a big family.'

—Annie Regan, Wildwood Beach Patrol

Lifeguarding forges bonds for a lifetime

Area beach patrols share similar experiences but each has own personality



Sarabeth Henne/STAR AND WAVE

Annie Regan of the Wildwood Beach Patrol.



David Nahan/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

A member of the Cape May Beach Patrol competes in the surf dash event during a South Jersey Lifeguard Chiefs Association competition this summer. The 15 beach patrols in the association have many similarities but also have their own personalities.

By SARABETH HENNE
Special to the Star and Wave

OCEAN CITY — Their shared goal is making the water safe for the hundreds of thousands of tourists who flock to the shore each summer, but the 15 beach patrols in southern New Jersey have personalities as distinctive as the shore towns they protect.

Few active guards know that better than Renny Steele of the Sea Isle City Beach Patrol.

Steele, 67, has been guarding the beaches since 1968 and has been captain of the SICBP for more than 30 years. In his 47-year career, he has learned that each beach patrol "has its own personality and culture."

"I think Sea Isle has a very close-knit (culture). There is a lot of bonding that goes on. Everybody has everyone's back, they care about each other," Steele said. "That's the kind of thing that makes Sea Isle different."

Their rookie camp, a weeklong boot camp-style course designed to ascertain who is suitable to patrol Sea Isle's shores, is another attribute that sets the patrol apart from the 14 others in the South Jersey Lifeguard Chiefs Association, covering 40 miles and about 700 guards from Brigantine to Cape May Point.

"One of the traditions that we have is our rookie school. ... It's very

mentally and physically challenging," Steele said. "We break them down as a unit and build them back up as a unit. Because they go through this, everybody on the patrol, when they graduate, has respect for what they've been through because they've been through it, too. I think that's the most important tradition we have."

While the lifesaving skills are important, that's only half the battle, according to Steele. He says he looks for candidates with quality character and a "high social IQ."

"We hold lengthy interviews, and the reason we do that is because we're very particular about the type of individual we bring on the patrol," he said. "We're looking ... (for) people who have good people skills, (and) who can communicate with the public, who will represent Sea Isle and the beach patrol in a positive light."

Steele said if he had to sum up lifeguarding in one word it would be "brotherhood."

A family affair

The Thiess brothers of the Ocean City Beach Patrol are a literal testament to that.

Bryan Thiess and his brother, Shanin, are among the most ex-

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David Nahan/STAR AND WAVE

Renny Steele of the Sea Isle City Beach Patrol says each beach patrol 'has its own personality and culture.'

Threat to visa program may harm tourism

Wildwood, Ocean City fill jobs with foreigners

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

instead of foreign workers with H1-B visas.

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE — Each year, J-1 Summer Worker Travel (SWT) foreign exchange students arrive in New Jersey and work in seaside resorts and other industries, supplementing the workforce and spending months experiencing American culture.

Although this program brings thousands of seasonal workers to the country, and provides a boost to Cape May County's businesses, all that could be changing.

On April 18, President Donald Trump signed the Buy American, Hire American executive order, which advocates higher wages and employment rates for U.S. workers while enforcing and administering immigration laws.

Although Buy American, Hire American spared J-1 visa SWT, White House advisers want to eliminate the cultural exchange program, according to a Wall Street Journal report.

The order would give preference to Americans for skilled technical jobs

The White House is examining possibly expanding the order to eliminate the J-1 SWT program, the J-1 Intern, Trainee, Camp Counselor and Au Pair programs.

Preventing foreign exchange students from working in Cape May County would be devastating economically, both in the region and the country, according to Denise Beckson, director of operations and human resources at Morey's Piers in Wildwood.

"It's really just going to impact New Jersey tourism significantly, and tourism nationwide that's heavily involved in this program," Beckson said. "If we're not compelling for people to come and visit because we don't have the shoulder season or our hours are too short or we can't keep up and offer new products or more rides, if we can't staff things, we may not stay as relevant as a vacation destination."

Morey's Piers employs 1,500 people, with 745 of

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CBS3 brings team to spotlight what's cool in Cape May

Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — CBS3 brought its 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. newscast live to the Washington Street Mall on Sept. 1, which included prerecorded segments on the Cape May Lighthouse, Congress Hall, the Chalfonte Hotel, the Emlen Physick Estate, the county zoo, the Cape May-Lewes Ferry, the Original Fudge Kitchen, whale watching boats and the Cape May Star and Wave.

"The history behind this town is something to talk about," CBS3 anchor Ukee Washington told viewers.

A segment showed the Cape May Lighthouse's original Fresnel lens from 1859, now on display at The Museum of Cape May County, along with a Civil War flag.

CBS3 profiled the Star

and Wave, showing copies from the late 1800s from the museum, acknowledging its role as the nation's oldest weekly resort newspaper. Managing Editor Jack Fichter told Washington the Cape May Star and Wave covered the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.

Mayor Chuck Lear was interviewed by Washington and anchor Jessica Dean. Lear noted a mayor in the 1970s had the foresight to work to preserve the historic homes.

"I think there are a million other mayors that would trade places with me," he said.

A new CBS3 web camera was unveiled on the roof of the Montreal Beach Resort Inn. The segment included an interview with owner Larry

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