

# **Jones Beach Junior Lifeguard Program 2026 Welcome Back Newsletter!**

## **Welcome Back, Junior Lifeguards & Families!**

As we prepare for another exciting summer on the sand and in the surf, we are thrilled to welcome back all of our returning Jones Beach Junior Lifeguards!

Throughout the winter and early spring, our Parent Committee, Lifeguard Operating Board, and the New York State Department of Parks: Long Island Regional office have been working behind the scenes to ensure the 2026 season is organized, safe, and filled with opportunity. This newsletter is the first in a series designed to keep you informed with important updates as we approach opening day.

## **Our History & Gratitude**

The Jones Beach Junior Lifeguard Program was founded in 1998 by veteran lifeguards Scott Riegel, Bob Adler, Jim Figliuolo, and Tom Curtin. Their vision was simple but powerful: introduce young swimmers to the fundamentals of ocean lifeguarding in a fun, disciplined, and educational environment. What began with just 20 participants has grown into a program that now serves over 250 junior lifeguards each summer, ages 9–16. Our Junior Lifeguards train in:

- Ocean safety and surf awareness
- Rip current identification
- Rescue techniques
- Proper use of professional lifeguard equipment
- Physical conditioning
- Teamwork

The ultimate goal remains unchanged: preparing the next generation of beach rescuers to join the elite Jones Beach Lifeguard Corps.

Each year, approximately 30–40% of new Jones Beach lifeguard hires come directly from our Junior Lifeguard ranks. That statistic speaks volumes about the strength and impact of this program.

From the early 2000s through 2024, the program was guided by the steady leadership of parent volunteer and later New York State Parks staff member Laura Baldassare. What began as an act of volunteer service quickly became a lasting commitment that helped define the spirit and success of the program for more than two decades. Laura's leadership, organization, and unwavering belief in our young athletes shaped not only how the program operated, but also the culture that continues to carry it forward today.

Laura devoted countless hours behind the scenes, often taking on responsibilities far beyond what was asked of her to ensure every athlete felt supported, encouraged, and included. She understood that success was measured not only in athletic achievement, but in confidence gained, friendships formed, and the sense of belonging created within the team. Her ability to recognize potential in each individual whether athlete, volunteer, or parent helped foster an environment built on encouragement, accountability, and mutual respect.

Through changing seasons, evolving challenges, and years of growth, Laura remained a constant source of stability and positivity. She built strong relationships within the community and created traditions that strengthened the bonds between families and athletes alike. Her dedication extended beyond logistics and organization; she cultivated a true team culture rooted in compassion, teamwork, and pride.

As we prepare to move forward into another season, we want to sincerely thank Laura for her extraordinary years of dedication and service. The foundation she helped build grounded in community, mentorship, and a belief in the potential of every athlete will continue to guide us. Her ability to see the best in people and bring them together will always remain an enduring part of this program's identity.

With the support of George Georman, Long Island Regional Director of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, and Jeff Mason, Director of Waterfront Parks, Long Island Region, the program moves forward under the leadership of JBLC Captain DJ Paulson and Lifeguard Michael Scanlon. They work alongside our dedicated parent volunteers, Ana Eng, Julie Pergan, and Michelle Lee, and in coordination with the New York State Parks Long Island Region team, including Jessica Anderson Ruiz, Brenda Temps, Meghan Miller and Fynn Haughney.

Together, this collaborative team carries forward the values and traditions that have defined the Jones Beach Junior Lifeguard Program for generations while continuing to create meaningful opportunities for the athletes of today and tomorrow.

We are always looking for families interested in volunteering. More information on ways to get involved will be shared as the season approaches.

### **New for 2026: Pilot 9-Year-Old Age Group**

For the 2026 season, the Jones Beach Junior Lifeguard Program will be piloting a 9-year-old age group. This decision was made after careful review of national standards, regional practices, and the long-term sustainability of our program. The United States Lifeguard Association designates "C" Junior Lifeguards as ages 9–11, and many Long Island agencies begin their programs at age 8 or 9. Additionally, when our program first began, 9-year-olds were included; the minimum age was raised to 10 in 2007 due to staffing demands. With our current strong instructor base and program structure, we believe this is the right time to thoughtfully reintroduce this age group in a pilot format.

All 9-year-old participants will be required to complete the same 100-yard pool swim test as every Junior Lifeguard, ensuring readiness and safety standards remain unchanged. The curriculum will be developmentally appropriate and focused on ocean awareness, environmental education, safe surf entry and exit techniques, and teamwork-based fitness activities. As with all aspects of our program, this pilot group will be carefully monitored throughout the season to ensure it maintains our high safety and instructional standards.

### **2026 Program Dates** *(All sessions held at EBHO – East Bathhouse Operations)*

- **Sunday 6/21** – 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM
- **Sunday 6/28** – 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM
- **Sunday 7/12** – 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM
- **Sunday 7/19** – 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM
- **Sunday 7/26** – 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM
- **Sunday 8/2** – 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM
- **Sunday 8/9** – 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM (end-of-season activities and recognition.)

## Competitions

- **Tuesday 7/14** – Jones Beach Junior Lifeguard Tournament (10:00 AM – 4:00 PM)
- **Tuesday 7/21** – USLA Mid-Atlantic Junior Lifeguard Regionals (Sea Girt, NJ)
- **Wednesday 7/29** – All Women’s Lifeguard Tournament (Lido Beach, NY)
- **Tuesday 8/4** – USLA Junior Lifeguard National Championship (Location pending USLA approval. Tentatively Ft. Lauderdale, FL)

Competition participation details will be shared as we get closer to each event.

## Paperwork for Returning Junior Lifeguards

Registration for the **2026 Jones Beach Junior Lifeguard Program is now available for returning members** at: <https://jbjg.org/forms>

Please download and complete all required forms and submit payment of **\$135.00** (check or money order made payable to: **NHT-LI**).

All materials must be mailed together, including:

- Jones Beach Junior Lifeguard Registration Form
- USLA Registration Form
- Physical Form
- \$135 payment

**Mail to (new address):**

Jones Beach Junior Lifeguards  
P.O. Box 247  
Babylon, NY 11702  
**ATTN: Fynn Haughney**

**All paperwork must be received by May 12, 2026** to secure your child’s spot in the program. Please be sure all forms are fully completed prior to submission to avoid any delays in processing.

## Looking Ahead

Every summer at Jones Beach is built on three pillars:

**Safety. Skill Development. Character.**

We take pride in developing strong swimmers, confident young leaders, and future lifeguards who understand responsibility, teamwork, and resilience. Whether your child hopes to become a Jones Beach lifeguard one day or simply wants to challenge themselves in the surf, we are excited to support them.

We look forward to seeing everyone back on the beach soon.

Here’s to another summer of sun, surf, and growth at Jones Beach!