

If It Makes Her a Better Lifeguard, She Will Do It

BY JACK GRAVES

Amanda Calabrese would be a prime candidate were there an East Hampton lifeguarding poster child contest.

Most everything — everything athletic in any event — that she's done thus far in her young life — she's 16, about to enter her senior year at East Hampton High School — has been undertaken with an eye toward becoming a better lifeguard.

Growing up in a family within East Hampton's lifeguard community had been nice, she said during a recent break from a car wash at the Montauk Community Church — the proceeds of which are to help underwrite an East Hampton team's trip to the national lifeguard tournament in Virginia Beach, Va., next week.

"It's about helping people and having fun," said Calabrese, who was taught to swim by Heather Hartstein, a friend of her mother, Lynne. She joined the junior lifeguard program here when she was 7, starting at East Hampton Village's Main Beach and moving to Indian Wells in Amagansett when she was 11, mentored by such coaches as Eric Bramoff, her father, T.J., Tom Mott, Rob Lambert, and Chris Chapin. She joined the Y.M.C.A. East Hampton RECenter's youth swim team, the Hurricanes, when she was in sixth grade.

She swims the butterfly and the backstroke with the Hurricanes, "though I swim because I enjoy it," she said, "not because I want to be a champion swimmer really. The main reason I joined the Hurricanes was so that I could become a better lifeguard."

And when it comes to lifeguarding, she said that in contrast to



Paddleboarding is Amanda Calabrese's favorite event, though she's a strong swimmer and runner too. *Craig Macnaughton*

students who undertook community service projects simply to obtain the requisite credits, she didn't need to be pushed when it came to being of help to others.

But, as aforesaid, fun, which would presumably include in a lifeguard's lexicon being part of a team and the sense of buoyant confidence derived from facing up to the ocean and lifesaving's considerable challenges, is a big part of it.

"She's very confident in the water," said John McGeehan, a veteran lifeguard (and former East Hampton High girls swimming coach) who was overseeing the car wash.

What she really loves — and, wonderful to tell, it's connected to lifeguard life — is paddleboarding. Not to mention, not necessarily in the following order, surfing, on longboards, hurdling, pole-vaulting, and field hockey.

"I love the speed of it," she said when asked what she loved about paddleboarding. "The challenge of the waves. . . . It is a rescue tool, though they're used more for rescues in California."

Despite her just-swim-for-fun demurrals, Calabrese recently won two ocean swimming races here — the half-mile swim that was part of Saturday's Montauk Ocean Swim Challenge, and the 400-meter distance swim in the Main Beach invitational lifeguard tournament on July 17. (As well as the paddleboard relay, along with Katrina Garry, Luey Mullin, and Melanie Mackin.)

Calabrese passed the ocean lifeguard certification test in June and has been with the Ditch Plain crew in Montauk since. She has already been in numerous national lifeguarding tournaments.

Continued on D2

Continued from D1
winning gold medals in paddleboarding and Iron Guard (distance swim, distance run, and distance paddle) competitions, and a silver (behind Sophie Kohlhoff of Montauk) in beach flags.

She's been to international track competitions for youngsters of Italian descent in Italy three times, the first two as a competitor, the third time as an assistant coach. Her second year she won a bronze medal in the 800. She ran, she

said, in order to swim better.

Her third visit to Italy, as a coach and as a reporter/photographer, took place recently. A story she wrote of the experience, she said, appeared in the July 9 issue of *America Oggi*, this country's only Italian daily newspaper.

She's going to Montpelier, France, as a member of a U.S. national youth lifeguard team for a tournament in mid-September. She hopes to do the paddleboard, beach flags, and 4-by-90 beach sprint relay there, as well as several lifesaving relay pool events.

Also this summer, she and her brother, T.J., have been among those giving surfing lessons periodically to special-needs children from all over Long Island as part of the Montauk-based Long Island Communities of Practice's year-round offerings.

"She's wonderful," LICOP's founder, Helene Fallon, said of Calabrese. "You couldn't ask for someone who was more dedicated — she's wonderful with the kids."

"These kids might not have access to surfing otherwise," said Calabrese. "I love to see their connection with the water. When they're in it they're laughing and giggling. It's great to watch."