Thank you for choosing the Portraits of the Jersey Shore newsletter! My name is Gregory Andrus, and I go out and conduct interviews with people who live, work or visit the Jersey Shore. I meet seemingly ordinary people, and with three questions, I unearth how extra-ordinary they really are! Within the framework of running POTJS, I am also an author, a speaker, and advocate for the dignity of everyone. I am currently working on my second book, “Sand, Sea and Rescue: Lifeguards of the Jersey Shore.” The book will have interviews with over 50 lifeguards in over 20 shore towns, and will feature their stories and experiences in both text, and audio format, coming in June 2022!

With this newsletter, you will be able to get all the latest news pertinent to POTJS, the “Story of the Week” where I share an interview from the previous week, and my reflections on life, the Shore, and the ever-growing need for compassion. Please enjoy this five story PDF, which includes a never before seen, exclusive sneak peek story from my upcoming lifeguard book. Thank you, and as always, may you always see the beauty in your own story. God bless you, Gregory.

Kayla, 16 years old: “Yesterday morning I was on the beach after surfing with some friends, and I was back by the fence, while I was waiting for my mom to pick me up. I was taking pictures of one of my friends while I was waiting, when suddenly these two women came running up to me and were frantic, asking me to go get their husbands who were in the ocean. I asked what happened, and one woman said, ‘They are stuck in a rip current, they can’t keep their heads above water!’ I look and I see three older men out there and without even thinking, I took off my jacket, threw down my phone, put the camera down, and with just a t-shirt and dry shorts on I grabbed my surfboard and ran into the water. The men were in a rip right by the rocks, and I could tell they were struggling and were definitely in danger.

“I got to them and said, ‘Everyone hold on to my board, keep your heads above the water, and I am going to drag you in. The one thing I need you to do for me is to kick. I can’t drag all three of you at the same time if you don’t kick.’ So I balanced the board, they began kicking and I began paddling. But it was definitely a challenge because there were big waves that kept hitting us. After about five minutes we all finally made it in. The men and the women were all so thankful, and I asked if they needed anything, and offered them some water, and kept making sure they were ok, but they told me they were ok.

“My mind was blank the whole time except to keep paddling. No matter what, I have to keep paddling. It was definitely hard, but we made it. It didn’t even hit me until last night. I was just in shock. I realized later that if my mom wasn't late picking me up, I may not have been there to save those men. ”

POINT PLEASANT
BORO
SURF
TEAM

Suzanne (left): “This is my mother, Joan. She has no idea who I am. She has dementia. She often says to me, ‘Is your mother coming today? I’d like to meet her.’ And she talks to people who aren’t there, but that’s just all symptoms of her dementia. Caring for someone with dementia is the hardest job in the world, because you don’t know what you’ll get. There is the sweetness, but then there is the horrible delusions and hallucinations, the fear, the panic. She lives with us now, and I get a lot of support from my cousin, also named Joan (Photo right), and other family who live close by.

“She was in memory care for almost four years. Because of Covid and the lockdown, my cousin and I were not able to see her for almost 10 months, so we decided to take my mom out. She was in a good facility, but they couldn’t keep up with everything. As a result, Mom’s cognition failed, her physical health failed, but she has perked up quite a bit since she has come home. She never walked at the memory care facility during Covid. This woman walked every day of her life, and all of the sudden, on March 8th, 2020, boom, she was locked in, and she did not see the light of day until I finally took her home. We walk with her every day now.

“My favorite memories of Mom was when she used to come to all of my high school basketball games, and she would bring my little brother, and she was always the biggest cheerleader in the stands. And now we’ll go out in my backyard, and even though I’m kind of old now, I still stay in shape. I have a hoop, I have a basketball, and I shoot and I shoot and she is just watching it absolutely loving it.”

SIDE MANOR
Plus' Assisted Living
Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation

Timothy: “My name is Timothy, and I am handing out pamphlets to educate youth how to help make kids with autism feel welcome. I made these because I have autism and none of my classmates ever made me feel included in school. Like when I would want to sit with kids at a lunch table, they wouldn’t let me sit with them, and that made me feel upset because of my disability.

“So I made a pamphlet ‘How to be a Good Influence for People with Disabilities.’ My pamphlets have 10 Ways to Help Autistic Kids Feel Included. Some of the steps include to be sure to spend time with them outside of school, or invite them over for a play date or a party.

“I have friends in my life now. I go to a church group in Allentown New Jersey and they are all my friends. They always let me hang out with them.”

“My name is Claudio. When I was eleven years old I was on a bike with my family one evening, and a car that was driven by a drunk driver went the wrong way down the road without its lights on and hit me on my bike. I flew over 100 feet in the air. I was given 72 hours to live, and I actually died three times but was brought back to life. I did survive, but I have no peripheral vision, I have a steel rod going through my leg, and I have brain damage. I have been on disability my whole adult life, but I still want to work, and I push carts even with a limp. I live with my parents, and I help support them. They never gave up on me, and I always want to be able to give back to them.”

Exclusive Sneak Peek Story from my forthcoming book, “Sand, Sea and Rescue: Lifeguards of the Jersey Shore,” due out June, 2022.

“My name is Logan Figular, and I've been a lifeguard for five years. It was hurricane season, and there were waves of considerable size, about seven or eight feet high that day. As a lifeguard, you have to swim in all of the conditions that the ocean gives you, so we trained that day in those intimidating waves. On days like that one, if you're riding a wave in, you’re going to be turned and pushed and pulled and held under the water.

After swimming out in the ocean for a while to train, on my way back in to the beach I was pulled under a substantial wave. I was held under for what felt like three minutes, but was probably about 30 seconds. But while I was being held under the wave, in my head I was thinking, ‘Oh my gosh, am I ever going to make it back to the surface, or am I going to stay down here?’ Finally, the wave released me and I get up to the surface, took a deep breath of air, when - bam! Another wave hits me, and I'm held under the water again! I’m wondering ‘Am I going to make it back to shore or am I going to die out here?’I get back to the surface again, and I'm swimming as fast as I can, really kicking and pulling my arms. Finally, with sheer determination, I finally get back to the beach, exhausted.

After I got back to the beach I just stared at the ocean for a while, my respect and my appreciation for the ocean at an all time high. The ocean can be crazy, dangerous, and people really underestimate it. Before that day, I also underestimated it. I didn't think that a lifeguard who's trained in the ocean could be held under for that amount of time and question if she would live. I realized that even the best of swimmers, the best of lifeguards can find themselves in dangerous situations out there. It can be you, it can be anybody. Never underestimate the ocean. It is always to be respected.”

~Midway Beach