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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**PLEIN AIR ARTISTS ALERT BEACH PATROL TO EMERGENCY
AND CAPTURE THE RESCUE ON CANVAS**

OCEAN CITY, MD — *August 10, 2015* — Sunday morning was a typical day at the Ocean City inlet. Fishermen cast their lines from the rock jetty. A group of plein air artists painted the scene. Lifeguards were just arriving at the beach.

But a life-or-death emergency was occurring offshore.

A boogie boarder, caught in the rushing current of the Ocean City inlet and unable to fight it, was being swept out to sea. Two artists participating in the annual “Artists Paint OC” plein air event saw the emergency unfolding.

Artist David Simpson of West Ocean City notified the Ocean City Beach Patrol of the emergency, initiating the rescue. Artist George Kalwa of Baltimore and Ocean City knew he had witnessed a remarkable moment and made it the focus of his painting.

Simpson, who often surfs nears the inlet and knows the waters well, was watching an artist paint near the jetty when he saw the struggling boarder. He recognized the situation as dangerous and quickly notified the Ocean City Beach Patrol, which was not yet on duty.

“The lifeguards weren’t in their chairs yet, but I saw Lauren Reck, a lifeguard I knew, sitting in her car waiting to go to work,” Simpson said. “I told her what was happening. She dropped her coffee and book, blew her whistle and went right into action.”

According to the Beach Patrol, Crew Chief Kevin Johnson, who was also parked at the inlet lot before going on duty, heard Reck’s multiple whistle blasts, indicating she needed backup, and radioed requesting Coast Guard assistance.

Reck and Johnson entered the water and stayed with the boarder, who was washed out to sea “at least a half a mile,” Simpson said. “They risked their own lives to save him.”

A Coast Guard boat pulled the boarder and lifeguards to safety within 30 minutes.

During the rescue, artist George Kalwa, one of 34 artists participating in a two-hour Quick Draw contest in the area, recorded the event. He was already set up and painting at the north jetty when he saw the rescue first hand.

“The tide was screaming through the inlet,” Kalwa said. “I was in the right place at the right time. The rescue was perfect for me because I can paint so fast.”

Kalwa has experience painting quickly. He is a former courtroom illustrator who worked in Baltimore and Washington D.C. capturing the action in many high-profile trials, including Oliver North’s.

Kalwa’s finished painting, showing the lifeguards in action and the churning waters of the Atlantic, won 2nd place in the Quick Draw competition, sponsored by the Art League of Ocean City. The judge, Ann Coates of Bishop’s Stock Gallery in Snow Hill, said the painting of the rescue deserved an award.

“It was extraordinary that the artist was there to witness this event and capture it so perfectly on canvas,” she said.

Kristin Joson of the Ocean City Beach Patrol said the swimmer was lucky to have been spotted by the artist and rescued without serious injury. The lifeguards made more than 70 rescues on Sunday due to the heavy rip currents.

“We were not on duty at the time, and the outcome could have been horrible,” she said. “That’s why we have the motto, ‘Keep your feet in the sand until the lifeguards are in the stand’.”

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EDITORS: High resolution photo attached.

CAPTION: Artist George Kalwa captured on canvas the rescue by the Ocean City Beach Patrol of a struggling boarder in the inlet Sunday morning. He won 2nd place for his painting “The Rescue” from the Art League of Ocean City that holds the annual plein air event.