BSSC Summer 2026 🌞



A little look at what we've been up to—and what's coming next.

A Note from Bella 👋🏾

Summer has been FULL.

It's been a BIG summer for BSSC. From paddling out together for our 6th Annual Liberation Paddle Out, to getting in the pool for the first time, to planning our biggest party yet—we've been busy.



Here's a little look at where we've been, where we're headed, and what I am most excited about

as we head into the fall.

The Beach Ball 🪩🌊

Come get dressed up and get down for BSSC.

If you've been around BSSC for a while (& know me well!), you know we love a good party and get together. So this year, we decided to do our BIG one.

On Thursday, September 3, we're bringing our community together at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History for **The Beach Ball**—a night to celebrate BSSC, our community, and everything we're building together.

Think formal meets under the sea: good food, good people, music, a little bit of sparkle, and plenty of ocean-inspired fun. 🐚✨

But The Beach Ball is about more than getting dressed up. It's also a fundraiser supporting the work that makes BSSC possible, from keeping programs free to creating new opportunities for our community to connect with the water. Whether you've been with us since day one or you're brand new to BSSC, we'd love to see you there.

🎟️ Tickets are on sale now.

Get Your Tickets →
Ticket sales made through Givebutter will be matched through the end of August, making this a great time to reserve your spot and double your impact.

Support The Beach Ball →
We're also looking for businesses and community partners who want to help make the Beach Ball happen.

Volunteer at The Beach Ball →
Want to be part of making the night happen? We're looking for volunteers to help us bring The Beach Ball to life. From decoration creating and setting to set up and break down to helping behind the scenes - we would love your help!

We Paddled Out 🖤

6th Annual Liberation Paddle Out Recap

On June 19, we came together at Cowell Beach for our 6th Annual Liberation Paddle Out. And y'all… **What. A. Day.**

Every year, LPO reminds us why this work matters. It's a day to honor Juneteenth, remember the people and stories that came before us and will come after us, celebrate Black joy, and make space for our community to be together—on the beach, in the water, and beyond.

This year, we had surfers, swimmers, beach-goers, volunteers, artists, partners, families, and friends all showing up to celebrate, remember, paddle out, and be together.

Check out the LPO recap video by **@FMZ Media** below!



A few highlights from this year:

226 participants
52 volunteers
19 community partners
88 community supporters

"*Seeing all the smiling faces and joy throughout the event. Gave me so much comfort and safety out on the beach*" - Patricia, LPO Participant

My favorite part of the event was.. "*Supporting such deep accomplishment that leads to deep joy and healing.*" - Greg, LPO Volunteer

To every person who paddled out, volunteered, sponsored, donated, shared a post, brought a friend, or simply showed up: **thank you.**

We couldn't do LPO without you.

We're Learning to Swim 🏊

Our first-ever swim pilot is officially underway.

This summer, BSSC took our work somewhere new: the pool.

Through our partnership with the City of Santa Cruz, we launched an 8-week swim pilot designed to create a welcoming, culturally grounded space for people to build comfort and confidence in the water.

Our first cohorts, Guppies + Goldfish, have been getting in the water, building skills, and, most importantly, having fun.

So far, we've:

Taught 5 lessons
Served 12 participants
Involved 8 coaches + volunteers

And we're already thinking about what's next.

Our pilot wraps up at the end of August, and we're excited to explore what it could look like to continue and expand swim programming beyond this summer.

We're still figuring out what comes next, and we know that making it happen will take community.

Know somebody who might want to support this program?

👉🏾 Introduce us.
👉🏾 **Support the program.**
👉🏾 Share this with someone who should know about BSSC.

What's Coming Up 🌊

Summer isn't over yet.

There's still plenty happening around BSSC. Here's what's on deck:

🏄🏾 P2PUP (Registration closed)

Our sixth cohort of the Prepare to Pop-Up Program (P2PUP) begins next Thursday!

P2PUP is a multi-week ocean relationship-building course for people who feel nervous in the ocean or want more support building their confidence and skills. Participants move through the program alongside a consistent cohort, creating space to build trust, gently work through anxieties, and develop more positive experiences in and around the water.

P2PUP is not a swim or surf lesson. Instead, participants meet over several sessions to connect with one another and practice skills that are especially valuable in a dynamic ocean environment. The program was created in direct response to community members who wanted more preparation and support before joining BSSC's ocean activities.

We are excited to welcome our newest cohort!

Learn More →

🗣️ Community Focus Groups

We're partnering with the City of Santa Cruz to make sure Black and BIPOC voices are represented in the City's Shoreline Adaptation + Management Plans.

We're inviting Black and BIPOC community members who live, work, surf, swim, recreate, or spend time along the Santa Cruz coastline to join a 90 minute virtual focus group. You do not need to live in Santa Cruz to participate! We want to hear from anyone who cares about these coastal spaces and may be impacted by future shoreline changes.

Sign up **here** by Friday, August 14 to join.

Participants will receive a $75 stipend for their time participating in the focus group.

🪩🌊 The Beach Ball

Don't forget: The Beach Ball is coming up September 3. If you're planning to join us, grab your ticket! If you'd rather help behind the scenes, we're looking for volunteers too.

Get Your Tickets →
Volunteer at The Beach Ball →

🌊 Fall PUP(s)

Dates coming 'atcha live on September 1st!

Our Pop-Up Program introduces participants to surfing through welcoming, community-centered sessions led by BSSC staff and volunteer coaches. Each session offers an opportunity to try

something new, spend time in the ocean, and connect with others in a supportive environment.

Once registration opens, sign-up links will be available on our **website.**

Follow us on Instagram so you don't miss registration.

Follow @blacksurfsantacruz →

Summer Intern Spotlight 👋🏾

Meet ('Lil) Bella

You've probably seen her around this summer, so we figured it was time to officially introduce her. 👋🏾

Bella has been helping make things happen behind the scenes this summer, and we're excited to have her as part of the BSSC team.

We asked her a few questions so y'all could get to know her a little better.

SUMMER SPOTLIGHT **MEET BELLA! (AKA LIL BELLA)**



Q: What's your favorite beach?

A: Año Nuevo

Q: What are you working on with BSSC?

A: Right now I'm working on planning and sponsor outreach for our Beach Ball fundraising event, building out a timeline for our living history exhibit, assisting with behind the scenes work for the swim pilot program, and much more!

Q: What's something you've learned this summer?

A: So far, the biggest thing I've learned this summer is the importance of strong communication. Whether it's outreach to constituents, or making sure that I'm on the same page as the other members of the BSSC team, I've learned to prioritize clear, consistent, and intentional communication.

Q: Favorite BSSC moment so far?

A: My favorite moment working with BSSC this Summer was probably the first in-water session at our pool pilot program. Seeing everything come together with our awesome team of coaches and the participants finally being able to get started in the pool was so exciting!

Our Volunteer Team

Our volunteers recently completed our annual trauma-informed training with **Dr. Darlene Hall**.

Trauma-informed training helps our team understand how past and ongoing experiences can affect the way people feel, communicate, and participate. It gives volunteers practical tools for creating environments rooted in safety, choice, trust, patience, and respect - particularly in spaces where participants may have previously experienced exclusion, discomfort, or harm.

We are grateful to Dr. Hall and to every volunteer who participated.

Join Our Team of Surf Coaches

We are currently recruiting volunteer surf coaches and hiring for a paid Surf Lead position through September 30.

Whether you are interested in joining the team or know someone who may be a great fit, we would love your help spreading the word.

[Volunteer Coach Application]
[View the Surf Lead Position]

Because of You 🖤

BSSC doesn't happen without community.

We say it all the time, but we really mean it: BSSC is a community love story and what equity in action looks like.

Every lesson, paddle out, program, volunteer shift, and community gathering happens because people choose to show up.

And this summer has been a pretty beautiful reminder of what happens when they do.

Because of this community, BSSC has:

1,800+ people served since our founding
38% of 2025 participants experienced ocean recreation for the first time
Over 11,622 volunteers hours contributed since 2020

And somehow we're still just getting started.

Your support helps us keep programs free, build new opportunities like swimming, train coaches and volunteers, and create more spaces where our community can learn together.

Donate to BSSC →

Not ready to donate?
There are lots of ways to show up.

- Introduce us to a potential sponsor.
- Volunteer.
- Share our work.
- Bring a friend to The Beach Ball.

Every bit helps us keep building.

Around BSSC 📸

A few more moments from this summer.

A lot happens at BSSC that doesn't necessarily need a whole newsletter section, but definitely deserve a little love.

So here's a tiny summer photo dump. 📸



Pool Days
Learning, laughing, and getting comfortable in the water.



PUP Moments
Our PUP sessions are coming back in full swing for this Fall.



LPO Joy
Still not over this one.

🖤 Stay Connected

Website | **Instagram** | **Donate** | **Volunteer** | **Contact**

Let's keep learning together.

Donate Here!

Get Beach Ball Tickets!

Black Surf Santa Cruz | PO Box 2026 | Santa Cruz, CA 95063-2026 US

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