



Honorary Holiday Tree Lighter Nominees 2024

Mike Walke – P.A.L. Executive Committee President

The Santa Clara Police Activities League (SCPAL) was founded by Former Chief of Police Frank Sapena in 1970. The goal is to bring Police, neighborhood volunteers, and kids together in a positive setting. Mike Walke has been heavily involved in youth sports, organizing activities for youth such as softball, golf, flag football, BMX racing, and track.

He has been instrumental in community engagement programs like “Shop with a Cop” and fishing trips. In addition to his work with youth, Mike Walke served our community as a Parks & Recreation Commissioner from 2012 to 2020. He continues to be actively involved in local events, assisting with parking during the Art & Wine Festival, and ensuring the safety of attendees. His commitment to preserving the City's traditions is also evident in his involvement with the Santa Clara Parade of Champions since 2021.

Kimberly Vernon – Miss California

Santa Clara's own, Kimberly Vernon, was crowned the 100th Anniversary Miss California! She says growing up in Santa Clara instilled a love for performance and community in her at a young age. She is grateful her mom signed her up for all of the Parks & Recreation activities that piqued her curiosity, leading to her love of the arts and dance in classes taught at the Community Recreation Center. Performing at the Art & Wine Festival, Fourth of July All-City Picnic, Holiday Tree Lighting, and Nutcracker were her favorite community events. She marched with Santa Clara Vanguard and had the opportunity to tour the country performing. Kimberly attended Santa Clara High School and graduated magna cum laude from CSU Fullerton, majoring in Theatre and Cinema Television Arts.

Kimberly held the titles of Miss Santa Clara County in 2020, 2021, and 2024, and Miss Santa Clara in 2023. Now, as Miss California 2024, she is excited to represent Santa Clara and has her sights set on becoming the next Miss America. Her commitment to accessible arts education is highlighted by her community service initiative, "Arts for All," which brings arts education to Title 1 schools and lower socio-economic communities.

Chris Carver – Former Santa Clara Aquamaids Head Coach

Chris Carver is a groundbreaking synchronized swimming choreographer and coach of the famed Santa Clara Aquamaids Club. As coach of the U.S. National Team, the National Team won every gold medal in elite international competition between the 1991 Pan American Games and 1996 Olympic Games. Chris has produced more than 50% of the USA's Artistic Swimming formally known as Synchronized Swimming Olympians since 1984. Chris was named Coach of the Year by U.S. Artistic Swimming (formally known as Synchronized Swimming) in 2005 for the 14th consecutive time since 1992, and is reflected in her 14 U.S. National Team Championships with the Santa Clara Aquamaids since 1985.

Bill May – Aquamaids Head Coach

Bill is a FINA artistic swimming champion in both the mixed duet and men's solo events, a pioneer who opened the doors of artistic swimming to men, and a trusted mentor to artistic swimmers around the world. Bill trained with Santa Clara Artistic Swimming and has always



been the quintessential SCA emissary, continuing to train with Chris Carver throughout his career and becoming an icon in his own right.

Todd Spohn – Head Coach, Santa Clara Diving

Head Coach Todd Spohn has led Santa Clara Diving since 2011. Todd and his talented staff have established Santa Clara Diving as one of the top clubs in the nation. Over the last few years, Santa Clara Diving has produced three (3) age-group National Champions and numerous Junior National Finalists, as well as Regional and Zone gold medalists. Spohn earned a bachelor's degree in communications in 1986, and a master's degree in Coaching Science in 1993, both from Miami. During his own stellar diving career at Miami, Spohn was a 6-time MAC finalist, and 3-time NCAA Zone Championship qualifier. Spohn competed and medaled internationally at the Pan Pacific Masters Diving Championship. He has also performed as a professional high diver.

Kevin Zacker – Head Coach, Santa Clara Swim Club

Coach Kevin was born and grew up in Southern Oregon. He swam competitively growing up and continued swimming at Iowa State University, setting the school record in the 400 IM and being voted team captain his senior year. After graduating from ISU with a degree in Finance, he started coaching at King Aquatic Club in Washington. He also served as the Head Coach of Thomas Jefferson High School for several years. After coaching at King Aquatic Club for five years, Kevin moved to Scottsdale, AZ and began coaching with Scottsdale Aquatic Club, becoming the Head Coach in 2007. During Kevin's time at SAC, he built a nationally competitive program built around teamwork and a positive environment. In 2021, Kevin accepted the position of Head Coach at Santa Clara Swim Club (SCSC). He is excited to rebuild a tradition of excellence at SCSC and create a culture that swimmers of all ages and abilities want to experience.