



Freshwater Heroes

Inside this issue you will learn how everyday people become real-life heroes, by giving their time and talents to protect and restore lakes, rivers, wetlands, shorelines, and the drinking water of the Great Lakes region for future generations.

Congratulations to Our 2020 Freshwater Heroes Award Winners

Going Above and Beyond to Protect Our Water Resources

As you know, working to protect and restore our precious waters—drinking water, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and shorelines is HARD work. But it is also very rewarding. This edition of Freshwater Heroes is about highlighting and celebrating the work of everyday people jumping into action to solve some of the most pressing water issues across the Great Lakes region. These individuals and organizations represent a dedicated group of water protectors.

Many groups and individuals receiving our Hero Awards had significant victories in their work to protect water resources in 2020. Others are being applauded for the many years of ongoing efforts. Freshwater Heroes never give up on doing what's right for our waters and communities.

In every community around the Great Lakes, you'll find thoughtful, committed residents taking action to protect our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, shorelines, and drinking water. Small, individual actions can make a big difference, and at Freshwater Future, we're inspired by those who devote so much of

their time to making things better for their communities and all of us.

These heroes provide seemingly unlimited energy and passion for their causes without asking for recognition, because it is in their hearts and it is the right thing to do. We salute these Freshwater Future Heroes and all of the thousands of citizens taking time from their busy lives to make the Great Lakes and our communities better places for each of us.





Highlighting the Heroes that Work Hard to Protect and Re



CORRINE ARMISTEAD
Earth Economics

Corrine Armistead is the former GIS Manager for Earth Economics. In 2018, Corrine and her colleagues worked with Freshwater Future to adapt a phone app that residents can use to document flooding and stormwater problems due to rain or snow events. Collecting and mapping this data provides information that residents can use to advocate for stormwater management and green infrastructure needs to address flooding. When COVID-19 hit last spring, the urgency around flooding shifted to water shutoffs. We learned from our community partners in cities like Chicago, Detroit, Toledo, Flint, and Benton Harbor that city municipalities could not identify which homes had water shut-offs and still needed to be restored. Enter, Corrine.

Corrine lent her time and expertise to help adapt the stormwater app for identifying families living without water. She mentored and worked closely with Freshwater Future's staff to document the innovative stormwater app to document and map homes in need of water restoration. Already, this tool has led to Freshwater Future identifying 50-plus families living without water in southside Chicago and will be used to help additional communities throughout the region. Thanks, Corrine for helping get water turned back on during the pandemic.



JEFF WHITELOW
**Bright Neighborhood
Community Development**

Jeff Whitelow has been known for his profound ability to walk in the shoes of those in the most vulnerable communities and help bring vital information to those who need it most.

Taking a vow of poverty to personally assess the life of those most vulnerable in Chicago, enabled him to identify that water shutoffs from unaffordable rates and lead exposure are serious problems. Jeff has championed the search for residents eligible for the new drinking water Utility Billing Relief (UBR) program in Chicago and assists them in enrolling into the program that forgives 100% of residents debts after one year of consistent payment.

Jeff is dedicated to expanding the group's reach to replicate his efforts and partners throughout the most impoverished communities in Chicago with the goal to further aid those in need and ensure public health for all Chicagoians. Thank you, Jeff for your devotion to helping others selflessly.



KAREN REINBOLD
Freshwater Future Board

Karen Reinbold has served as the Treasurer on Freshwater Future's Board of Directors for six years.

Karen embraces her role to provide review and oversight, greatly benefiting Freshwater Future. She encourages discussion, welcomes brainstorming of problems and issues, and is always looking for better, more efficient ways to produce financial information. Staff greatly appreciate her friendly, "let's do this" attitude and her genuine interest in helping with anything we throw at her. Karen is incredibly generous with her time, and she always finds a way to share a smile and some laughter with others.

Karen's experience may be in numbers, but she is committed to protecting water resources. She helped a grassroots neighborhood group to oppose a private easement on a popular public park/golf course that would have allowed a paved road to destroy wetlands. Karen created a petition gathering about a hundred signatures submitted to the Metro Water Reclamation District in opposition to the easement. Although the easement was approved, advocacy efforts raised public awareness and appreciation of the resource generating hope that the road will not be built in the future. Thank you Karen for your leadership and dedication to Freshwater Future.



DAVID MARK | LAKE MICHIGAN | PIXABAY.COM

Store Our Most Precious Resource



MIKE HARRIS Flint Development Center and Community Lab

When kids in Flint, Michigan needed a place for recreation and learning, Mike Harris and partners went out and bought a school that was no longer being used and turned it into the Flint Development Center. Now kids and families on the north end of Flint have a place to call their own with a gym, learning library, and an array of programs.

When everyone in Flint needed safe drinking water, Mike again stepped up with partners and developed the Flint Community Lab. In fact, the Flint Community Lab is named in memory of McKenzie Patrice Croom, granddaughter of Mike Harris. Mckenzie was born with seizures that were complicated by her exposure to Flint's drinking water. Now families in Flint can have their residential water tested for free to know whether they can trust the water, or if needed, make changes in the home to make the water safe to drink. Mike Harris, we thank you and all of your many partners for your vision, ability to get things done, and willingness to take the time to listen to needs and help find solutions.



JERRY HOLYCROSS Thermo Fisher Scientific

Solving problems by connecting people with chemistry are Jerry Holycross' strengths. Without Jerry's assistance, the Flint Community Lab might still be a pipedream. When Freshwater Future and our partners approached Jerry with an idea to help Flint residents test their own water for lead, Jerry's enthusiasm and willingness to immediately get involved moved the BIG idea forward. As a longtime Michigan resident, the Flint Water Crisis hit close to home. Jerry quickly saw how technological innovations empowering the community at the grassroots level could help equitably address drinking water issues.

Jerry opened doors to Thermo Fisher Scientific for equipment donations and the expertise needed to plan, build, and open the Flint Community Lab. More importantly, he helped build a strong relationship between his employer, Thermo Fisher Scientific, and the partners in the Flint Community Lab that continues to flourish. His generosity and advocacy have empowered an entire community with free access to the finest scientific technology. Thank you, Jerry, for sharing your time and expertise to benefit all Flint residents.

Thanks to Tim Veverica for assisting with this tribute.



Freshwater Voices is a joint production of Freshwater Future, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization and Freshwater Future Canada, a registered Canadian charity.

STAFF

ALEXIS SMITH
Community Program and
Technical Associate
alexis@freshwaterfuture.org

ALICIA SMITH
Associate Director
alicia@freshwaterfuture.org

ANN BAUGHMAN
Associate Director
ann@freshwaterfuture.org

BRANDON TYUS
Policy and Community Program
Associate
brandon@freshwaterfuture.org

HILLIARD HAMPTON
Associate Director for Urban
Partnerships
hillard@freshwaterfuture.org

JILL RYAN
Executive Director
jill@freshwaterfuture.org

KRISTY MEYER
Associate Director
kristy@freshwaterfuture.org

LAURIE BREIGHNER
Grants and Administrative Specialist
laurie@freshwaterfuture.org

LESLIE BURK
Communications and
Development Director
leslie@freshwaterfuture.org

STEPHANIE ALTROCK
Director of Logistics and Financials
stephanie@freshwaterfuture.org

FRESHWATER FUTURE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

KAREN REINBOLD
MELANIE WELCH
ADAM PARKER
TRENT STARK
TOM KNOTT
DONALD WIGGINS JR.
STEPHANIE SMITH
ROBERT LETSCHER

FRESHWATER FUTURE CANADA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

KELSEY SCARFONE
LEAH SILVERMAN
TRENT STARK
LINDSAY TELFER

DISCLAIMER: Freshwater Voices is intended to provide a forum for the free exchange of ideas among citizens and organizations working to protect aquatic habitats in the Great Lakes Basin. The interpretations and conclusions presented in this newsletter represent the opinions of the individual authors. They in no way represent the views of Freshwater Future, funders, members, donors, Freshwater Future Canada or any organization mentioned in this publication.



RYAN FONKERT | WINTER SERENITY, LAKE SUPERIOR | FLICKR.COM



Concerned Citizens of Butler and Beyond

When Concerned Citizens of Butler and Beyond learned that a composting facility was to be built in Butler County, New York, the group quickly organized to stop the facility project that would be accepting 350 tons of sewage sludge from New York City and surrounding boroughs daily. The group undertook a massive public outreach campaign to inform local and state representatives and surrounding communities of the dangers Wolcott Creek and Lake Ontario would face if the project was given the green light to proceed.

As a result of Concerned Citizens of Butler and Beyond's organizing work, the group received notice in July, 2020 that they successfully stopped the proposed "Butler Composting Facility" from moving forward protecting public health, the environment, and the local economy. Thank you to the Concerned Citizens of Butler and Beyond for their dedicated work to protect Lake Ontario and people's drinking water.



Need Our Water (NOW)

Back in 2010, the "forever chemical" PFAS was detected at the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base located in Oscoda, Michigan, contaminating residential drinking water wells as well as area surface water and shorelines. While numerous studies and investigations had been conducted, it took the help of the community-driven group Need Our Water (NOW), organized in 2017, to push for action on a long-term cleanup plan.

NOW continues to advocate and hold government agencies accountable. By becoming a voice for the Oscoda community and organizing with other groups who share their concerns, this group has created a strong movement that has captured the attention of decision-makers and is working with Michigan's congressional delegation to press for quicker action and funding. We commend NOW's continued diligent efforts to bring a spotlight to PFAS issues at the local, state, and national levels. This group ensures that the community knows what's happening and clean-up actions move forward.



Hold Erie Coke Accountable

Hold Erie Coke Accountable, a group of local residents in Erie, Pennsylvania, recently worked to ensure that the Erie Coke Plant would be brought into compliance with environmental requirements during a permit renewal process. The plant had a history of environmental violations, and the company and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) were in a legal battle when the DEP announced it would not renew the plant's operating permit.

With growing pressure from regulatory agencies, the local wastewater treatment plant and residents, Erie Coke abruptly ended its operations in December 2020. This closure will protect public health and the environment from polluted air and water emissions. The group, however, understands the closure also brings job losses and leaves a site cleanup that may have to be led by the state. Hold Erie Accountable is prepared to work to solve these issues. We applaud the residents of Hold Erie Coke Accountable for their hard work to bring public health issues to the surface and now their continuing work to ensure proper site cleanup and encouraging job creation.



Toledo Water Council

The Toledo Water Council, with support from Freshwater Future staff, organized by committed community members to address water access and security with a focus on equity and justice. The council has taken

on issues surrounding the regionalization of Toledo's utilities, harmful algal blooms, lead contamination, and water affordability. Even during the coronavirus outbreak, the residents' commitment to securing wa-



SHARON MOLLERUS | LAKE SUPERIOR, DULUTH | FLICKR.COM



Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation

Nestle recently requested an increase in their pumping from wells near Mecosta, Michigan where they bottle water for sale. The request to increase pumping from 150 to 400 gallons per minute at one well was contested by Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation (MCWC), and after nearly two years of expenses and work, MCWC has been told they never had jurisdiction. As a result, the group has filed an appeal in court regarding the water increase to prevent impacts to a nearby river and wetland. This isn't the first court battle for the group, having spent 10 years previously battling the initial Nestle water bottling facility. Taking an international corporation to court is expensive and exhausting. For more than 20-years, MCWC's volunteers have increased awareness of the impacts of water withdrawals, and taken legal action to achieve change. Our heartfelt thanks go out to MCWC for all of their dedication to protecting our water resources and being willing to stand in for our water resources in court.



Coalition to SAVE the Menominee and Mining Action Group

Mining 150 feet from the Menominee River, which flows directly into Lake Michigan and was recently cleaned up from legacy pollution, never seemed like a good idea to many that depend on and appreciate the quality of the river. The Back Forty project proposes to excavate an 84 acre open pit sulfide mine, 800 foot deep, 150 feet from the banks of the Menominee River. A number of groups, including Front 40 Environmental Fight (Freshwater Hero in 2016), Coalition to SAVE the Menominee River, and Mining Action Group have been fighting from both Wisconsin and Michigan, where both states border the river. Thanks to years of effort, the wetland destruction permit for the mine was denied through a contested case. We applaud all those who worked so diligently to ensure the mine can't harm the Menominee River, Lake Michigan and the surrounding area.



Friends of Kingston Inner Harbour, Ontario

Friends of Kingston Inner Harbour In Ontario have been using telemetry research on Northern Map Turtles by attaching antennae to the turtles' and tracking movements with a receiver. The data was used to identify habitat along the harbour shoreline for the turtles. Northern Map Turtles are considered Species of Special Concern in Canada, as well as being considered Specially Protected Reptiles under the Ontario Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. By mapping the habits and habitats of these turtles, Friends of Kingston Inner Harbour has been able to work with city officials and other partners to ensure shorelines remain natural in areas important to the turtles. While this effort is ongoing, Freshwater Future commends the great work to ensure that development activities do not remove the habitats of the turtle, and bring relief to both turtles and humans who appreciate the natural spaces in our urban areas.

ter justice did not falter. The Toledo Water Council advocated for a moratorium on water shut-offs, ensured neighbors had their water service restored, pushed for and helped draft ordinances to keep families in

water like the tenant landlord ordinance and debt forgiveness program, and urged the Toledo Department of Utilities and city government to conduct a water affordability study. We applaud the Toledo Community

Water Council for serving as a shining example of how people power can make a difference and for their successes in ensuring access to clean water for City of Toledo residents.



Volunteer Extraordinaire



NANCY STALEY

While Nancy already received a Freshwater Future Hero award in 2015, we believe she deserves another moment of recognition for her long-time efforts of volunteering above and beyond. If you've received a newsletter or communications in the mail from Freshwater Future, chances are that Nancy Staley's helping hands worked on getting that information to you. She's been volunteering with Freshwater Future since 2014, and Nancy has faithfully continued helping us even during the COVID-19 pandemic by working on mailings in her home and going the extra mile to safely meet staff. Nancy is so good at what she does that not only do we count on her to send out mailings efficiently, we rely on her expert advice since she also volunteers countless hours with many other non-profit organizations in northern Michigan. Nancy is both a catalyst and anchor for our work. Nancy's vibrant attitude is infectious and her many talents are so appreciated including sewing masks for staff and baking treats.

Thank you Nancy and to all of our volunteers who work behind the scenes making sure that our waters are protected. We couldn't do this critical work without you.

Memorials



DAVID SPANGLER Lake Erie Charter Boat Captain

Freshwater Future honors Dave Spangler who sadly passed away in October 2020. Dave was the Vice President of the Lake Erie Charter Boat Association, and long-time advocate for Lake Erie. Dave dedicated over a decade to his passion—charter boat fishing and Lake Erie.

When he was not running a charter, he was educating the media, decision-makers, and the public on Lake Erie and harmful algal blooms. He was known to bring a little glass jar of algae with him to meetings to ensure people could connect to the algae plaguing the lake he loved so much. Whether taking a 5am call before running a charter, driving to Columbus to testify on a bill about Lake Erie, or water sampling to ensure the state had data on the health of the Lake, there was no questioning Dave's love for Lake Erie.

Dave's legacy will continue to live on in the hearts of so many including ours at Freshwater Future, as well as his work through the numerous people he inspired to care so deeply about a Lake he loved.



MICHELE WHEELER Bad River Wisconsin

Lake Superior champion and clean water advocate, Michele Wheeler, passed in June 2020, after a nine-year battle with cancer. Freshwater Future witnessed Michele's leadership in her role as the first Executive Director for the Bad River Watershed Association (now known as the Superior Watersheds Association). Under her guidance, the organization continued important water quality monitoring and culvert restoration work in the watershed. Michele also lifted the organization's voice during a controversial mining project proposed at the headwaters of the Bad River.

Michele's passion for taking care of clean water, in particular Lake Superior and its watershed, revolved around relationship building with a broad diversity of people and organizations while being firmly rooted in good science. Michele was a skilled communicator who engaged people with her sharp wit, compassion, and innate ability to see situations from others perspectives. Michele's many contributions to the Lake Superior watershed, and the people and communities she's served, will be felt for years to come.

Thanks to Valerie Damstra for assistance writing this tribute.

Thank You to All of Our Donors from November 1, 2020 through February 15, 2021

FOUNDATIONS

Brookby Foundation
J.A. Woollam Foundation
Juan M. Cordova Foundation
Land Trust Alliance
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
William A. Fisher, II Family Foundation
Petoskey-Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation
PAV Foundation

FUNDERS CIRCLE (\$1,000 AND MORE)

Anonymous
Carol and Robert Bertrand
William Fritz Jr. and Kathleen French
Glory-June Greiff
Tucker Harris
Murray and Jeanie Kilgour
Larry Krueger

MONTHLY DONORS

Stephanie Altmock
Ann Baughman
Leslie Burk
Patricia Hung
Jill Ryan
Kelsey Scarfone
Alicia Smith
Brandon Tyus
Jill Whelan

FRIEND OF THE LAKES (\$500-\$999)

Joey Arbaugh
Gary Belan
Nancy Belton
Robert Dean
Joseph and Robyn Flanagan
Rachel Fleischer
Molly Frounfelter
Ruth O'Gawa
Adam Parker and Tamar Rubin
Richard and Barbara Robbins

SPONSOR (\$250 - \$499)

Michael and Holly Angileri
Nelson Armour and Kathy Weaver
Kristina Clark and John Kemmerer
Tom and Bette Irwin
Karen Reinbold
Eileen and Ron Shanbrom
Richard and Jean Marie Shoquist
Rodger Thomann

SUPPORTER (\$100 - \$249)

Ann Acker
Todd Ambs
Anonymous
Jill Crafton
Judy Cremean
Margaret Deacy
Carolyn Deacy
Jan Deur
Gail and Bill Drake
Phyllis Edinberg
Paul Elsberg
Margie and Michael Fitzsimons
Reg Gilbert
Andrea Golembiewski
Christopher Grubb
Steve Hobbs
Nan Hunt
Daniel Johnson
Nicholas Krall
Dency Lippert
Suzanne McCune
Richard Micka
Kathleen Mullins
Zen Olow
Barbara Osbon
Ellen Sue Parker
Max Puchtel
Brian Rowse
David Rubin
Ray Schlaff
Andrew Schwarz
Mary Ann Smith

Susan Stinson
Peggy Swenor
Margaret and Ronald Talboys
June Thaden
Sally and Larry Wagle
Jan and Brad Wilkins
Gretchen Zuiderveen

MEMBER (\$50 - \$99)

Deb and Mike Baughman
Sharon Beck
Eileen Bielemeier
Sandra Brogan
Peggy Case
Ruth Clausen
Melvin Czechowski
Carole and Clifford Dahl
Kira Davis
Cynthia Donahey and Art Schoolmaster
Elliott Dudnik
John Engel
Norman Falconer
Tamar Fox
Ann Gollnitz
Linda Hardie
Bonnie Hay
William and Betty Henne
William Hickey
Ryan Hilbert
Gene and Carolyn Hodulik
Christian Janssens
Kim Kihnke
Renee Kivikko
Loretta Knight
Paulette Krom
Mark Leschishin
Jill Lloyd
Linda Luke and Leslie Neinas
David Malish
Jeanette Mateer
Kathryn Mondrella
Bethann Morgan
Julie Napoleon
Bruce Opalka
Sally Pierson
Paul Ripple

Gabriel Rubin
Patricia Safavi
Debra Shankland
Charlie Slack
Alison Stankrauff
Nancy Stewart
James Sytsma
Thomas Tisue
David Ullrich
Deborah Wagner
Jacqueline Wakefield
Melanie Welch

CONTRIBUTOR (\$1-\$49)

Yousuf Ali
Peter Ayres
Louis Bernstein
Leah Buchbinder
Summer Burk
Dan Clarkin
Vicki Deisner
William Delnicki
Judith Dushane
Hildy Feen
Chris Gateley
Heather Gibbs
James Goulet
Judith Hodel
Darroll and Sally Howard
James Jackson
Linda Jacobs
Robert Johnston
Gerald and Lolly Kamerschen
Kelvin and Julie Kohlhaas
Martha Marr and Larry Leprell
James McGookey
Laurenda S. Messer
Andre Motuzas
Hal P. Munger
George and Nan Myers
William Neal
Gordon Nelson
Bruce Palen
Danielle Parker
Andy Peot
Karen Phelps
William Rudolph

Carrie Scott
Paul Shedivy
Nancy Simon
Don Sporlede
William Tennant
John Vander Ploeg
Daniel VanMeurs
Victoria Vaughn
Jon Weistrop

CORPORATE DONATIONS

Amazon Smile
Canada Helps
CPI International
Nalgene Outdoor
Network For Good

ORGANIZATIONS

Committee to Preserve the Finger Lakes
Grosse Ile Nature & Land Conservancy
U-Links Centre for Community Based Research
Butte des Morts Conservation Club

VOLUNTEERS

Summer Burk
Nancy Staley



Give the Gift of Helping to Ensure the Healthy Future of Our Great Lakes Waters! Consider making a donation in honor of family and friends to Freshwater Future. The recipient will receive a greeting card with acknowledgement.



P.O. Box 2479
Petoskey, MI 49770

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PETOSKEY, MI
PERMIT #15

TOM GILL | LAKE MICHIGAN | FLICKR.COM

Freshwater Future Project Grants Program

**Project
Grants Deadline**
March 31, 2021
Apply for up to \$5,000
Call us for more information
231.348.8200

The work of protecting or improving our drinking water, rivers, lakes, wetlands, shorelines, and groundwater in the Great Lakes region depends on involved community members like you. Are you working to ensure access to safe, affordable drinking water or protecting a water source? If so, check-out Freshwater Future's 2021 grant opportunities guidelines to see if your organization is eligible. The deadline for Project Grants is March 31, 2021. Visit our website for additional information: freshwaterfuture.org/grants.



Follow Freshwater Future
on Facebook and Twitter!

facebook

twitter

FRESHWATER FUTURE
P.O. Box 2479
Petoskey, MI 49770
Phone: (231) 348-8200
www.freshwaterfuture.org

**FRESHWATER FUTURE
CANADA**
PO Box 233
Toronto, ON M5T 2W1
www.freshwaterfuturecanada.ca