2020 SERIES, ISSUE ONE



ur 2020 Freshwater Heroes are the water warriors, environmentalists, and social advocates who are making our communities a better place not only to live, but to thrive. Our heroes and heroines come from all over this region wearing a variety of hats as water research scientists, policy advocates, urban community leaders to committed volunteers, all aimed at protecting water from source to tap and contributing to what makes the 'Great Lakes' Region great.

This edition of Freshwater Voices highlights the work of everyday people jumping into action to solve some of the most pressing water issues in our states, province and across the region. Freshwater Heroes come from all over the Great Lakes region and their contributions are diverse, whether it is work to address pressing drinking water threats, commitment and dedication to improve regulations, stepping up as a community leader or behind the scenes leadership. Sharing their accomplishments as Freshwater Heroes Award recipients gives all of us as Great Lakes residents a chance to celebrate progress for something we all have in common—reverence for clean and healthy waters. Our vision for 2020 is clear as we embark to help communities with drinking water threats.



OPENING SPRING 2020

Celebration Event TBA



The Flint Development Center 4121 MLK Avenue Flint, MI 48505



Helping residents test water to ensure clean drinking water for all.

To RSVP, please contact Alicia@freshwaterfuture.org (231) 348-8200



Freshwater Future Staff Here to Help

Freshwater Future Staff gather to develop 2020 work plans, policy agendas, outreach goals, and action priorities.





Councilwoman steps up to solve problems and help constituents find solutions to address high lead levels in drinking water.



Photo courtesy of Louise Wrege
The Herald-Palladium

MaryAlice Adams— Commissioner of Benton Harbor



tepping up to solve problems and help constituents defines Councilwoman MaryAlice Adams' role in Benton Harbor. When the City's lead testing revealed a problem with high lead concentrations in drinking water, the Commissioner was asking questions, learning, and looking for solutions. When Freshwater Future reached out to Commissioner Adams, she did not hesitate to engage and take actions to benefit

her community and constituents. She provided connections to local leaders and has volunteered her time to learn the process of filter installation education. The Commissioner has been supportive of the Benton Harbor Water Council from the very beginning.

She has served Benton Harbor for over nine years as City Commissioner at Large and takes pleasure in working to serve the community as an advocate for Benton Harbor residents. The community and her peers speak highly of Commissioner Adams, sharing that she is a true public servant. Thank you to Councilwoman MaryAlice Adams for being a Freshwater Hero in your community.

Respected environmental attorney and hydrogeologist helps drive forward on PFAS cleanup.



Photo courtesy of Michigan Environmental Council

A.J. Birkbeck— Michigan PFAS Alliance



since the 1950's, a shoe factory in Rockford, Michigan routinely water-proofed its popular shoe brands and improperly disposed of waste. When the old tannery was scheduled for demolition in 2010, local residents voiced concern over possible drinking water contamination. Water tests confirmed the community's fears—higher than normal levels of the toxic chemicals called PFAS were found in residentials wells and the Rogue River.

Thankfully, resourceful environmental heroes like A.J. Birkbeck helped to inform and organize local citizens to take action. A.J., a respected environmental attorney and hydrogeologist, worked with the community to push for waste cleanup, enhanced wastewater treatment, installation of residential water filters, well-monitoring and safer municipal water sources. A.J. was also instrumental in forming the Michigan PFAS Alliance, a statewide organization focused on addressing PFAS contamination and legislative solutions. Thank you A.J. for your amazing work on PFAS contamination.





Peggy Case— Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation



n 2000, a group of community-minded people organized the Michigan Citizens for Water Conservation (MCWC) concerned about the environmental harm from Nestle Waters North America permit to withdraw

400 gallons per minute in Mecosta County to bottle water. Five-years later, MCWC successfully settled out of court to allow a pumping rate of only 218 gallons per minute, and in 2009, settled another lawsuit obtaining a 19-year commitment to limit pumping withdrawals.

Under Peggy Case's leadership of MCWC, the organization has continued to build on the legacy of protecting Michigan's groundwater by taking actions on hydrofracking and hazardous waste disposal in injection wells. MCWC activism revealed the many environmental problems connected to a proposed potash mining operation and regulatory loopholes. They continue to take legal action when it is often the last option available to protect water resources.

All of her past experiences, whether as an elementary teacher, microbiology lab technician, singer or beekeeper, have resulted in a powerful environmental and social justice activist and leader. Thank you, Peggy, for your commitment to leaving a better world for future generations.



Naomi Davis— Blacks in Green (BIG)



ow do you solve our climate crisis and sustainability problems in the urban environment? Naomi Davis, founder and President of Blacks in Green (BIG) in Chicago, is doing it one sustainable square mile at a time. Naomi is an inspiring visionary and community leader.

Through her BIG work, Naomi promotes a green-village where every household can ultimately walk-to-work, walk-to-shop, walk-to-learn, walk-to-play, helping to reduce greenhouse gases.

But Naomi is more than a visionary, she is a doer. In her West Woodlawn neighborhood, she celebrated the recent opening of the Big Green Living Room. The Green Living Room is an innovative community gathering spot and business lounge that provides an energy bar with computer stations, retail offerings, studio stage for podcasts, business back-office services, and enhanced professional services. Just outside the Green Living Room is a pollinator garden that provides a nature connection in this urban neighborhood. Freshwater Future continues to be inspired and educated through Naomi's work, and we look forward to continuing our partnerships through a new community water council.

Leading and inspiring people to help MCWC's efforts to protect water for generations to come.

Founder and President of Blacks in Green (BIG) brings her vision of a sustainable community via green spaces to Chicago.



After recognizing the need in the Flint community,
Lab Manager and Analytic
Chemist at the Pellston
Bio Station helps make an independent, community-accessible water testing lab a reality.





Tim Veverica— Pellston Bio Station



s the Lab Manager and Analytic Chemist for University of Michigan's Biological Station located in Pellston, Michigan, Tim Veverica's daily job involves solving complex problems, analysis, and research. But thanks to Tim's extra efforts and innovation, he has been instrumental

in filling the gaps in research services for underserved communities. Over a five year period, Tim transformed the Biostation's traditional chemistry lab into a versatile analytical research facility that assists students, researchers, and nonprofits such as Freshwater Future with vital testing and environmental research studies.

Tim played a vital role in the initial phases of the Flint Community Water Lab currently being built at the Flint Development Center. Tim provided the initial lead testing of water samples collected by the Flint Youth Water Testing Program. Upon recognizing the continued community distrust in Flint's water system and the burdensome high cost of private water tests, Tim recommended an independent, community-accessible lab. He has provided his invaluable expertise in the logistics of the laboratory build-out to ensure that the Flint Community Water Lab has all the equipment, instrumentation, and installments needed for success. Applying his expertise to the emerging issue of the toxic family of chemicals called PFAS, he helped Freshwater Future establish our PFAS Testing Program. Thank you, Tim, for being an amazing innovator and Freshwater Hero.



Shelly Sparks— Flint Development Center



n the edge of Max Brandon Park's 107 acres in Flint, Michigan sat a vacant Ralph Bunche Elementary School for six years. Shelly Sparks had a vision for this closed school on the Northside of Flint—to create a place for community to gather, learn, and have fun. With

Shelly's business savvy and her strong relationships with many partners, the Flint Development Center opened in 2017. Since its opening, residents in the community have benefited from literacy programs, early childhood education, afterschool programs, job training, and the security of having a trusted, safe place nearby.

In the midst of the Flint Water Crisis, Freshwater Future worked with Shelly, Mike Harris, community leaders, and the Flint Development Center to launch the Flint Youth Water Testing Program. Now the Flint Community Water Lab is opening on March 25, 2020 and will offer Flint residents a trusted place to have the water in their home tested for free. Connected to the lab will be a workforce development program providing water testing and analysis, and community education about lead in drinking water, filter use and maintenance. Thank you Shelly for your willingness to take on environmental initiatives in addition to all your other work.



Canadian Journalists— For Lead Reporting in Canada

Rowledge is power. Thanks to a collaborative investigation involving more than 120 reporters in Canada revealing that lead contamination is prevalent in Canadian cities, people can take steps to reduce exposure and protect their health. After a year-long investigation in 11 cities and 12,000 tests, 18 percent of the results had lead levels above 15 ppb and another 33 percent exceeded 5 ppb, the maximum acceptable concentration for total lead in drinking water. Although Canada does not have a federal drinking water standard for lead, no amount of lead in water is safe for consumption.



We applaud these dedicated journalists with Institute for Investigative Journalism at Concordia University in Montreal that demonstrated the need for more oversight and testing to protect public health. As a result of the reporting, residents, schools and communities have the opportunity to be proactive in testing water supplies. Thank you for reminding us that we cannot take for granted that our drinking water is safe and for being Freshwater Heroes.

Freshwater Staff Heros



April Weppler— Fresh Water Protector



hanks to April Weppler, our former Program Manager for Freshwater Future Canada for her dedicated efforts and being a constant hero for water protection. She provided consulting services to groups throughout the Great Lakes region on strategic planning, board development, and fundraising planning. April shared her expertise and experience with many land trusts in Canada, helping to strengthen this movement and their conservation practices that benefit water resources. Thank you April, for your water protection efforts in Ontario.



Tony Maas— Manager, Strategies



A big picture thinker, policy influencer and team builder, Tony Maas has been working to protect the health of Canada's freshwater for over 15 years. Freshwater Future was fortunate to have Tony as part of our team over the past four years. Tony's leadership contributed to recent efforts in Canada to develop a program similar to the U.S. Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, which has invested billions in restoring toxic hot spots and habitat in the Great Lakes. Thank you, Tony, for your passion for impactful water protection measures in Canada.



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

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Freshwater Future's Grant Programs

ASSISTANCE for POTENTIAL APPLICANTS...

We are here to help.

We recommend you give us a call to discuss potential projects and ask questions.

Laurie Breighner
laurie@freshwaterfuture.org

Freshwater Future has delivered Great Lakes grant programs providing more than \$4 million over the past 25 years that support community based efforts to protect the waters in our Great Lakes region. Visit our website for a map of projects.

freshwaterfuture.org

The goal of Freshwater Future's grant programs is to provide financial support for activities led by community groups working to promote river, lake, shoreline, wetland, groundwater, and drinking water protection in the Great Lakes Basin through grassroots advocacy efforts.

PROJECT GRANTS: The Project Grant Program provides awards ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 (USD) for grassroots project expenses and activities that promote water protection. This can be done through influencing community or individual behavior, addressing corporate conduct, or encouraging good public policies. Projects should strengthen the role of individuals and community groups working locally to protect shorelines, inland lakes, rivers, groundwater, drinking water and wetlands in the Great Lakes Basin.

Spring Cycle Deadline: March 31, 2020 Fall Cycle Deadline: September 30, 2020

We will be offering a webinar before the deadline to discuss this grant program and answer your questions before applying. Visit freshwaterfuture.org/grants/project-grant-program/ for webinar dates.

SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY GRANTS: Special Opportunity Grants are "emergency grants" for projects working to protect shorelines, inland lakes, rivers, groundwater, drinking water and wetlands that may not coincide with the application timeline or funding period of the Project Grant Program, up to \$500 (USD).

No Application Deadline:

Qualifying applications are funded until funds are depleted for the year.

CONSULTING GRANTS: Formerly known as Insight Grants, Consulting Grants provide awards ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 (USD) in value to improve organizational effectiveness of grassroots organizations through customized trainings and services on board development, membership expansion, communications, fundraising, strategic planning, and more. Grant funds are used for Freshwater Future staff time to provide professional assistance to your project or organization. No Application Deadline: Qualifying applications are funded until funds are depleted for the year.

For a detailed description of Freshwater Future's Grants Programs, visit: freshwaterfuture.org



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Order An Affordable PFAS Test Kit From Freshwater Future

n the interest of public health, residents deserve more transparent resources that can help better protect L themselves from the ongoing PFAS contamination. Access to information about the quality of drinking water is an important tool against health impacts from PFAS. Freshwater Future and the University of Michigan Biological Station are offering residents a low-cost PFAS test so they can make decisions about their water source. Please

visit https://freshwaterfuture.org/ourissues/drinking-water/pfas/. There, you can order one of our testing kits in the mail. Results will be delivered electronically and by mail.



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