



# Voices freshwater

2019 SERIES, ISSUE 1

ELVIS KENNEDY | FLICKR.COM | LAKE MICHIGAN SUNRISE

## What's In This Issue:

- We're highlighting the work of many water activist across the region, heroes who are working to make our world a better place.
- With the recent passing of activists Mama Lila Cabbil and Josephine Mandamin, we give dedication to their efforts in ensure equality and protect water.

## In This Issue . . .

In this year's edition of Freshwater Heroes, we are recognizing the incredible work of many water warriors, environmentalists, and social advocates who are making our world a better place. Our heroes and heroines come from all over the region, representing a diversity of styles, including water research, policy advocacy, and more aimed at not only protecting water from source to tap, but also contributing to what makes our region widely known as the 'Great Lakes' Region. Not all heroes wear capes and fly to defeat villains . . . at least not literally. When you think about the traditional sense in which we think about heroes, it is the people and collective efforts that make a difference, often in the smallest ways. This edition of Freshwater

Heroes is about highlighting 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.







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## Sean Nestor

Sean Nestor is a grassroots organizer who founded Toledoans for Safe Water in 2015. Sean created the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, as an amendment to the City of Toledo's municipal charter, asserting that Lake Erie is a living ecosystem with rights, and that the residents of Toledo have a right to clean water. It establishes standing for citizens to file suits against Lake Erie's major polluters by granting legal standing for Lake Erie to defend itself in court, in much the same way that private corporations are granted standing.

One of Toledoans for Safe Water's first efforts was a public art installation on the one-year anniversary of the Toledo Water Crisis. Toledoans for Safe Water and their partners installed a 16-foot geodesic dome at International Park, made out of over 6,000 water bottles collected from Toledoans following the water crisis. Volunteer grassroots group collected over 10,500 signatures to place this Charter Amendment for the Lake Erie Bill of Rights to a public vote. The bill passed during a special election in February.

Thank you Sean for your leadership in promoting democracy and citizen empowerment and being such an awesome Freshwater Hero!



## Sarahi Mercado

Sarahi Mercado, is a 16 year old member of the board of directors of the Genesee County Latino/Hispanic Collaborative or in Spanish, *LaPlacita*. In addition to taking on the role of board member, when residents of her community in Flint, Michigan had questions about their water quality, she joined a group of students from *LaPlacita*, to implement a program in partnership with Freshwater Future to test Hispanic families' water for heavy metals. Sarahi and the other students received training to collect water samples, made calls to see which families wanted their water tested, and then went to the homes to take samples. Once the results were in, Sarahi took the lead in learning about what the results meant and then met with families individually to explain those results in Spanish. Because of her fluency in both Spanish and English, Sarahi took scientific information and explained it clearly to hispanic families, educating them and answering concerns about their water. Sarahi was also able to provide information about how to install and maintain filters and more. We honor Sarahi for her willingness to find solutions, take initiative and help others.

Thank you Sarahi for your early start in helping others.



Sarahi, far left, posed with other members of the Genesee County Latino Hispanic Collaborative





## Rev. Edward Pinkney



Rev. Edward Pinkney is the current President and CEO of Black Autonomy Network Community Organization. He is also the pastor of God's Household of Faith, and a community activist. Last year, Rev. Pinkney partnered with Freshwater Future to complete water testing for residents in Benton Harbor for lead and other metals after the city fell out of compliance with the Lead and Copper Rule. As a result of Rev. Pinkney's leadership to get more testing, it confirmed there is a lead problem in the city's water resulting in more testing and the recent distribution of filters for residents. In addition, Rev. Pinkney is a national leader on engaging young people in electoral activism. Rev. Pinkney set the record for registering and mobilizing thousands of young voters across the country. Rev. Pinkney has organized workshops on various issues, such as alternative punishments for children and adults, juvenile courts watching, juvenile crime, and others covering medical and mental health issues in the justice system. For his work on many social justice and environmental issues, Pinkney has been the recipient of many awards including the State of Michigan Outstanding Citizen Award.

Thank you Rev. Pinkney for being a leader to protect the public health in your community!



## The Minnesota Division of Izaak Walton League of America

Izaak Walton League of America's Barry Drazkowski and Jill Crafton have been spending the past several years leading efforts that have resulted in meaningful international standards, creating new opportunities for group's related to fracking.

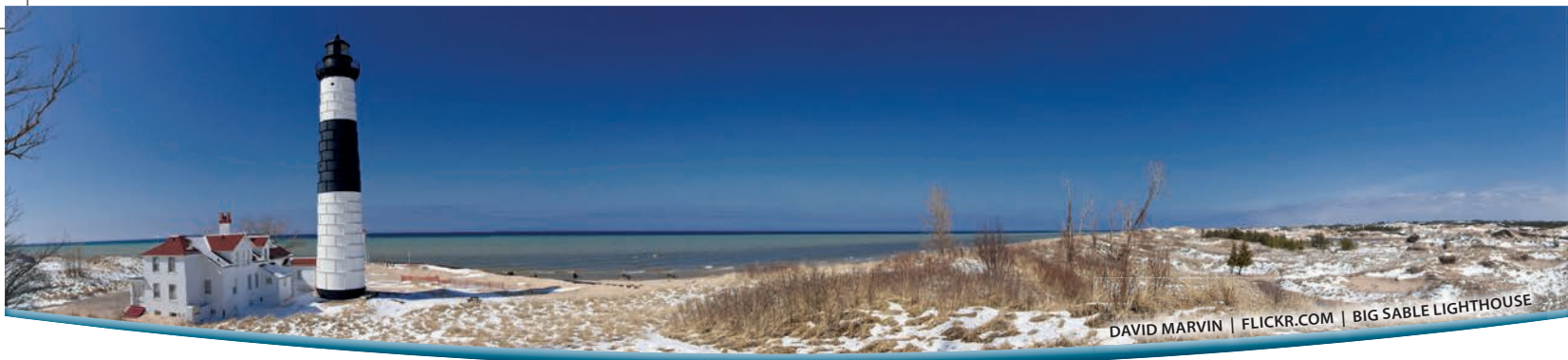
The new standards are in part the result of Barry's leadership role within American Society for Testing Material (ASTM) International, a lead organization that develops and publishes voluntary consensus technical standards for a wide range of materials, products, systems, and services. These standards are produced through collaboration with business, governments, and institutions. Federal, State, and Local governments reference and often require compliance with ASTM standards in their regulatory rules because they are well vetted, scientifically sound, and industry approved. For example, in the U.S., the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act requires the federal government to use privately developed consensus based standards whenever possible.

These standards would assure access to easily understood information about every phase of the fracking cycle and related harmful impacts to people. Barry and Jill committed huge amounts of time over several years to shepherd these standards as an important tool for water protection. Having access to this information paves the way for stronger advocacy efforts with decision makers aiming to increase protections for our air, land, and water.

Thank you Barry and Jill for your leadership!







## The Couchiching Conservancy

*“In an age of environmental paralysis, we get things done.” That quote, taken from the website of the Couchiching Conservancy, sums up the organization perfectly.*

In recent years, the Couchiching Conservancy has grown by leaps and bounds—their innovative and progressive approaches to land and water conservation and stewardship mean they are a critical part of protecting Ontario’s natural heritage.

One of the keys to their success is a highly engaged group of volunteers—people who care deeply about the mission of the Conservancy, and show their support through action. Whether it’s collecting water samples from area creeks, listening for evening frog calls on a nature reserve, or attending community events as an ambassador, this army of dedicated environmentalists is critical to the work of the Conservancy.



The staff of the Conservancy recognized the potential of these wonderful volunteers and have worked hard to ensure they are valued, recognized and supported. The staff and volunteers together form a powerful force that is working hard to protect ecologically significant land in the Orillia region in Ontario.

Freshwater Future has been honoured to work with the Couchiching Conservancy and support them in their endeavours.



## We the Youth of Detroit

Last fall We the People of Detroit’s youth leadership program, ‘We the Youth of Detroit,’ worked with Freshwater Future to collect water for scientific analysis of heavy metals. The water testing program formed as an immediate response to drinking water shutoffs across Detroit Public Schools Community District due to elevated lead levels. The youth learned hands on scientific water testing skills, communication and team development skills. Enough cannot be said about the resounding tenacious leadership shown by Detroit’s youngest and brightest minds. We The Youth of Detroit received hands-on leadership and advocacy training from We the People, learning many critical skills, including how to do effective community organizing around activism, social and environmental justice, and media training. These young heroes’ wasted no time putting their skills to use. Additionally, these Freshwater Heroes are all members of the Detroit Area Youth Uniting Michigan, a youth led environmental justice advocacy group, serving as a leadership pipeline for metro Detroit youth interested in social justice.

Thank you for your leadership.



Above: We the Youth of Detroit with Latia Leonard of Freshwater Future.

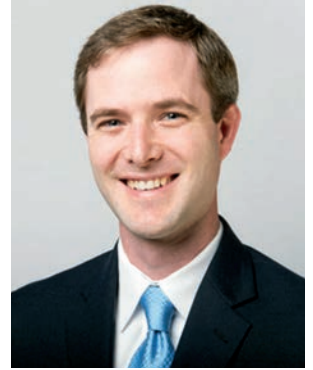
Left: Detroit youth prepares sign reading ‘Is your water safe?’



## Chris Grubb, Past Board Member

Growing up in southwestern Michigan Chris Grubb developed a reverence for water, often exploring the shoreline of Lake Michigan and Pretty Lake. Joining our team in 2002, Chris used his versatile professional skills with us in a variety of different roles. Starting as an Advisory Panel member helping to engage Michigan advocates, to his role working on the Healing Our Waters Coalition, contributions as a major donor, and most recently as a board member and Chair of Freshwater Future. We are grateful for the leadership role Chris provided to Freshwater Future, helping us to recruit new talented board members. Chris will continue to make a difference in his role as Assistant Regional Council for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region V.

Thank you Chris, for being an amazing Freshwater Hero.



## Holly Hughes, Past Board Member

Holly Hughes served as a board member to both Freshwater Future and Freshwater Future Canada boards. As a member of Seven Nations of Canada, a First Nation, and in her current role as Interim Band Manager of the Michipicoten First Nation, Holly shares a valuable perspective about water protection and threats. Holly's down to business approach, and wealth of experience in evaluation, consulting, and management was much appreciated on both boards. It is clear soon after you meet Holly that she has a strong love, respect and admiration for our waters and our earth, making her an amazing advocate for protecting our waters and lands.

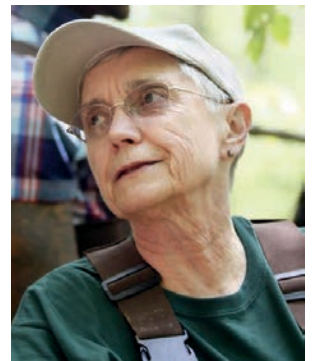
Thank you Holly, for being an amazing Freshwater Hero!



## Marya Czech, The Junction Coalition

Marya Czech is a lifelong advocate and defender of our environment and natural resources. Before joining The Junction Coalition, Marya spent 22 years as a professor and chair of the Biology department at Lourdes University. An ecologist by profession, Marya has long held great interest in the Great Lakes region, specifically around water and the Great Lakes. Marya is a committed water warrior to environmental justice issues which impact vulnerable people and communities of color. She spends her time at Junction researching the best strategies for engaging stakeholders on critical information around federal and local policy, while being a community voice for environmental issues. Some of her outreach has included child development curriculum, and interactive strategies to teach children how to identify states, cities, and important Great Lakes features.

Thank you Marya, for your work and dedication to environmental justice and the Great Lakes region.







## *In dedication to Mama Lila Cabbil and Josephine Mandamin*



### Josephine Mandamin

Anishinaabe water protector and activist Josephine Mandamin died in late February, she was 77 years old. Starting in 2003, Mandamin led a movement of indigenous water protectors to carry out a series of ceremonial water walks along the perimeters of waterways across Turtle Island (Earth). These water walks engaged indigenous women to connect the people with and pray for the water, which Mandamin taught was a traditional responsibility given to women and grandmothers. Mandamin also engaged the public in the water walks—raising awareness of pollution increasing on indigenous waterways. Mandamin walked more than 17,000 kilometres around Turtle Island's Great Lakes and other waterways in an effort to raise awareness about the human responsibility piece of respecting water. Mandamin received the Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Excellence in Conservation in 2016. She also played a key role in establishing the Great Lakes Protection Act during her time as Chief Commissioner of the Anishinabek Nation Women's Water Commission. Josephine's contribution to water justice will be long lasting for generations to come.

Thank you Josephine for your any kilometers traveled for water



Left: Josephine Mandamin



### Mama Lila Cabbil

Detroit water activist Mama Lila Cabbil passed in late February, she was 75 years old. For decades, Mama Lila was on the forefront of the national fight against racism and injustice, particularly focusing her efforts on clean, affordable water. Early in her career Lila formed a close relationship with civil rights icon Rosa Parks. Later, she and Parks both worked together at the Rosa & Raymond Parks Institute, a center for youth engagement and empowerment. Mama Lila's fight for equity led her in co-founding The Detroit People's Platform, a broad network of Detroit-based social justice organizations, activists, and residents committed to bringing about just transformation in economics and social dynamics through education and organizing. Cabbil fought for justice until her very last day.

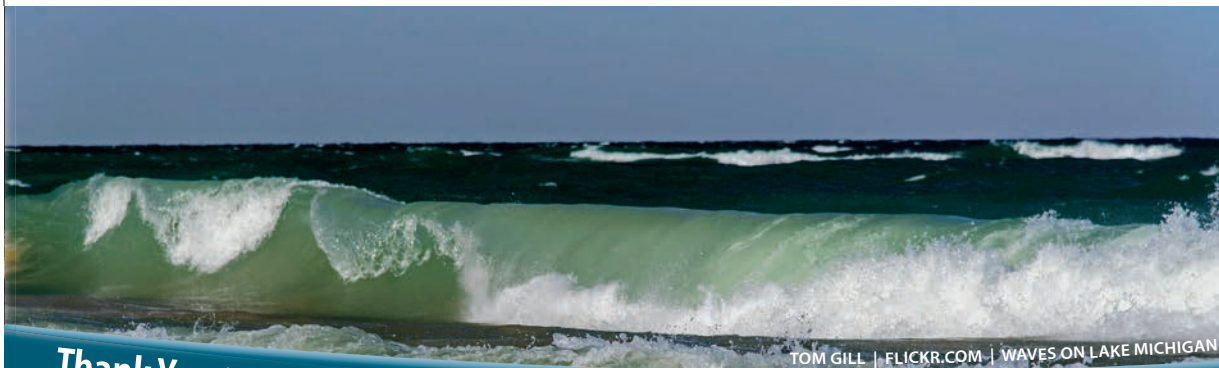
Thank you Mama Lila for your sacrifice, courageousness, and humanity, you will be deeply missed.



### New Staff Member Kate Hogan

Kate's primary role at Freshwater Future is to perform analytical tests for PFAS and heavy metals in drinking and surface water samples. She is a recent graduate of the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor, having earned her B.S. in Chemical Science. Prior to Freshwater Future, Kate was the Assistant Chemist in the Analytical Chemistry Lab at the University of Michigan Biological Station located in Pellston, MI, where she continues her work.





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In memory of our Dad and Husband Glen Dale on the anniversary of his way too early passing, Love Kim, Craig, Caelan, Lucas and Bev  
In Memory of Eliot Long, Given by Margaret Deacy  
In Honor of Peggy Case with gratitude for all her hard work on behalf of Michigan's waters  
In Honor of Jamie Bishop, Given by Bethann Morgan  
In Honor of Gary Belan, Given by Robert Winter



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In the interest of public health, residents deserve more transparent resources that can help better protect themselves from the ongoing PFAS contamination. Access to information about the quality of drinking water is an important tool against 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 sign up to order one of our testing kits in the mail with instructions. Results will be delivered electronically within two to three weeks.

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