



# Inland Seas Education Association Executive Director's Newsletter

October/November 2021



## Partners in Protecting the Great Lakes

**“Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much.”**

~ Helen Keller

What a difference a year makes. I hesitate to admit how scared I was during the early stages of this pandemic. Certainly some of that concern was for my health and the health of my family and friends, but I was also worried for Inland Seas. I'm pretty sure my master's program on leadership forgot to cover the chapter on leading an organization through a global pandemic. However, what I have been fortunate enough to learn over the years is the importance of partnerships. In fact, I can honestly say that the allure of bringing dedicated people together around one common vision/mission is the reason I decided to become a leader.

As I reflect on the 2021 season in particular and the long history of success associated with ISEA, it is clear to me that this has occurred because of the strong partnerships we have forged over our 32-year history. These partnerships include the many organizations all around the Great Lakes that share our stewardship mission, volunteers that wish to make a difference in the lives of youth, donors and agencies that support the work of ISEA and the partner agencies we work with, and the ISEA staff who share a desire to make this world a better place.

This season has been nothing short of spectacular and that is in large part because of you. If I had the opportunity to write the textbook chapter on leading an organization through a global pandemic, I would focus that chapter on developing, fostering, and leveraging strategic partnerships.

While I know the pandemic isn't over yet, I'm no longer worried about the longevity of Inland Seas. This season has demonstrated that the relationships we have built over the years can carry us through anything.

~ Fred Sitkins, Executive Director



Detroit Riverfront Conservancy Partnership



MSU Extension Partnership



## Change in the ISEA Online Store

Our online store is changing from an on-demand order system to a two-times-per-year order window (early spring and late fall). **Start your Christmas shopping** now by perusing our Fall 2021 offerings at [schoolship.org/store](http://schoolship.org/store).

**Orders are due by October 30, 2021** and will be delivered early December.

## Staffing to Develop and Maintain Partnerships



Izzy Cooper



Trisha Smrecak

Partnering with schools and organizations takes a team to be successful. New Program Coordinator, Izzy Cooper, is instrumental in working with each group's contact person to book their program and stay in communication throughout the process. In addition to working with groups, she schedules and monitors all our public programs. Another 2021 addition to our team is Dr. Trisha Smrecak. As the Education Coordinator, she is developing deeper partnerships with K-12 schools which frees up Jillian Votava, STEM Coordinator, to focus on our college and university partnerships. Both Trisha and Jillian collaborate with our partner groups to create educational programs related to the Great Lakes. Our

Great Lakes Educator, Rachel Ratliff, assists in delivering these programs along with ISEA volunteers (thanks to the work of Juliana Lisuk, Volunteer Coordinator). Juliana and Trisha also work year-round with educators in the Great Lakes Watershed Field Course. Our Ship Captain, Ben Hale, makes sure our program participants stay safe and leave with an enjoyable experience.

This small staff has accomplished great things, but as we expand our programming, additional staffing support will be needed. We are exploring the possibility of adding more internships and/or Great Lakes Educators to work with our volunteers in delivering our programs. Stay tuned for more information as we navigate the challenges of staffing a growing organization.

## Financial Partners

The impact our donors have in relationship to our partnerships cannot be overstated. Without the support of our corporate, foundation, organization, and individual donors, we could not do the work we do. Whether it is making Schoolship programs affordable, bringing the ship to distant ports, funding special programs, or backing new initiatives and expansion, they are more than donors, they are partners in our mission. Our program partners often provide funding for programming in their local areas or around the state such as the Les Cheneau Watershed Council, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, and MSU Extension. Other partners supply human resources to support programs such as The University of Michigan, MiSTEM, and Michigan Sea Grant. Volunteers greatly impact the bottom line and we admire the experiences and personalities they bring as well.

As we move forward with piloting year-round programming (a new initiative), we are confident there will be financial support to help us make these programs a success. If you would like to partner with us by supporting intern and Great Lakes Educator staffing for our winter pilot programs, please contact Fred Sitkins at [fsitkins@schoolship.org](mailto:fsitkins@schoolship.org) or 231.271.3077 x101.

*"Inland Seas shares Consumers Energy's commitment to a future with clean, sustainable energy that helps better protect Michigan's environment," said Carolyn Bloodworth, secretary/treasurer of the Consumers Energy Foundation. "We applaud Inland Seas in their mission to care for the Great Lakes for generations to come and are proud to support their efforts."*



We loved seeing people in-person at our donor celebration this year. A huge thank you to Frank Noverr and Toni Tonda for donating this beautiful space for our event. And to Kennard and Judith Weaver (pictured) for spending their 60th anniversary with us!

## Partners in Programming

To accomplish our mission of inspiring a lifetime of Great Lakes curiosity, stewardship, and passion in people of all ages, we partner with groups and individuals. While COVID impacted the number of individuals we normally serve in a year, 2021 exceeded our expectations. Through our school programs, our partners include teachers and their students. Individuals who participate in our summer programs become partners in our mission. In addition to the programs we offer, our assets (i.e., ships, facilities, and campus) are used as a platform for organizations with similar missions and for university professors and their students. Over the 2021 summer, we partnered with groups around the Great Lakes. For some of these groups we provided educational programming on the schooner *Inland Seas*. For others, like with the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, we learned from them as they delivered programming on the ship.

### 2021 School and Public Programs

#### Spring Schoolship Programs

- 29 Ship and Shore
- 1 Next Gen Schoolship
- 9 ROV

#### Summer Public Sails

- 12 Great Lakes Discovery
- 3 Fishes of Lake Michigan
- 2 Steady the Ship
- 2 Great Lakes Under the Microscope
- 1 What's in the Great Lakes Food Web?
- 2 Father's Day
- 1 Ladies on the Lake (multi-day trip)

#### Summer Schoolship Programs

- 2 Next Gen Microplastics
- 3 Next Gen Seamanship

#### Fall Schoolship Programs

- 16 Next Gen Microplastics
- 2 Next Gen Seamanship
- 8 Diving Deeper
- 1 Great Lakes Discovery Schoolship
- 5 ROV

#### Fall Public Sails

- 5 Night Sail
- 3 Fall Color

Group photo: Northport 1st graders

#### Suttons Bay

Wildlands Studies  
SEEDS  
Burdickville Yacht Club  
Harold Lassers  
University of Michigan  
TART Trails  
Leelanau Fiber

#### Charlevoix

Camp McSaubia  
Charlevoix Recreation Department

#### Hessel

Les Cheneau Watershed Council  
NaCASE - DOD

#### Trenton

Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge

#### Detroit

University of Michigan  
Detroit Riverfront Conservancy  
Detroit Parent Network  
Best Classroom Project

#### Houghton

Michigan Technological University  
MiSTEM  
MSU Extension

#### Marquette

MiSTEM  
MSU Extension  
Superior Watershed Partnership  
MSU Extension 4-H

### 2021 Summer Partners



#### Sault Ste Marie

Lake Superior State University  
MSU Extension

#### Traverse City

Marta Slocum  
Suttons Bay Bikes

#### Multi-Day Trips

Hessel to Trenton: U of M  
Houghton to Marquette: MTU  
Mackinaw City to Suttons Bay: Chicago Yacht Club

*"Your staff was top notch! They were very respectful and patient when explaining procedure and maintained our enjoyment and safety as a priority." ~Susan Cain, Ladies on the Lake participant*

As we begin piloting programs this winter, we continue to build partnerships with K-12 schools. In our soon-to-be renovated lab space, local schools will come for an expanded hands-on ROV learning experience with underwater sensors and circuitry. This program includes testing their work in the icy water of the bay. STEM camps are also being developed. These multi-day experiences will be piloted with schools over their school breaks.

## Schoolship Blog

Do you know about the ISEA Schoolship blog ([schoolship.org/schoolship-blog](http://schoolship.org/schoolship-blog))? Staff, interns, volunteers, donors, and guest bloggers share their experiences and insights around the Great Lakes. Whether it's science, sailing, or stewardship, you'll learn more about our work and the people who further our mission.

## Inland Seas Education Association Executive Director's Newsletter

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### Ways to connect with us:



231.271.3077



[isea@schoolship.org](mailto:isea@schoolship.org)



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