

PADDLE SPLASH

APRIL 2020

Canoe & Kayak Committee
Appalachian Mountain Club
NY-NoJ Chapter

Charles
in Charge

Voluntourism!



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On the Cover: A cancer survivor
learns to kayak with First Descents.

Sorry

**THE AMC IS
TEMPORARILY
CLOSED**

For paddlers, these are difficult times. We're off from work just as the April showers are filling the rivers, but we can't go paddling because we're confined to house arrest. We finally have the time for those overdue boat repairs, but we instead stare at our iPads obsessively watching video tutorials on how to wash our hands.

Armed with a small bottle of hand sanitizer (current retail price: \$499.99), we go hunting and gathering at Walmart, where the aisles look like a scene from *The Walking Dead*. The zombies are fighting over the last roll of Charmin, which has become the most valuable commodity on Earth. We come home empty-handed and start Googling for instructions on how to make artisanal homemade toilet paper.

And just when you think things couldn't possibly get worse, the AMC has cancelled all activities until further notice, in accordance with state and local mandates. All New York and New Jersey residents are encouraged to remain in their homes and all non-essential businesses are closed. It's a small consolation that liquor stores have been deemed essential.

During this time, we still want to stay in touch! Like and follow the AMC's Facebook pages to stay in the loop with your fellow members. When it's safe to come out and play, we'll update our pages with a list of our current activities. See you then.

Marty



AMC Headquarters



AMC NY-NoJ Chapter



AMC NY-NoJ Canoe/Kayak

A paraplegic kayaker learning to paddle.
Photo by spinalpedia.com



Paddling VOLUNTOURISM:

BY LORETTA BRADY

Adventures in Healing

He knew his mistake the minute he splashed through the maw of the Z-line drop. The kayak behind him was in trouble.

He'd led many inclusive trips before. Moreover—name withheld to protect the ignorant—his differently-abled follower had just nailed each eddy and stuck each peel out—as long

as these were *left* turns. For an injured veteran with one prosthetic arm, her whitewater mastery required strategic early warnings for river-right maneuvers.

Blind and visually impaired veterans, children and others learn to kayak, thanks to [Team River Runner's OuttaSight](#) program.

Rocks don't slip aside, even for wounded warriors.

Despite the certain swim, when all the pieces were put back together again, she barreled through the rest of the rapids, her excitement heightened, not dampened. Everyone heard her message loud and clear, "Don't underestimate us." To use a cliché that for once lives up to the hype, all found the trip "unforgettable."

Paddling's obsession with challenge, exploration, and campfire comradery makes it a natural fit for the growing movement of adaptive adventures. There's a nonprofit outfitter for seemingly every impairment.

And they *all* need volunteers.

For those living with serious illness, there's First Descents. (Read Suzanne Villegas' piece this issue to learn of her unforgettable volunteering.) Wilderness Inquiry leads canoe excursions in the Boundary Waters for those with "varying levels of mobility and cognitive function." Visually impaired veterans can join OuttaSight, Team River Runner's series "to get blind butts in boats!"



Universal paddling websites all echo some version of TRR's promise "to provide opportunities for health, healing, community purpose, and new challenges."

Binge autoplay all the [promo videos](#) and you'll grow dizzy from a contact high of utopian positivity.

Many are called; some are chosen.

We asked a recent volunteer, our own Donna Morgan, to weigh in on these lofty claims. Keep in mind Donna has paddled some of the most exotic waters on the planet. Not an easy gal to impress. Her response?

Women's Leadership Clinic on Utah's San Juan River. Photo by Donna Morgan.



“It was one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.”

TRR and the Adaptive Sports Association tapped Donna to safety boat and instruct on the annual Women's Leadership Clinic down the San Juan River. Donna's nomination stemmed from her five years coaching and instructing at local TRR sessions.

“I'd always admired how TRR worked,” she said, so it was a no-brainer to join them for this expedition.

“The river just wants you to visit every now and again.”

Eight women veterans blended with nine female volunteers.

“We spent the nights singing and laughing, and every day paddling.” Sometimes that meant facing sustained 45 mph winds.

You don't need to have served in the military to volunteer for TRR. Even if you're not a paddler, TRR needs volunteers at all their sites. Use the link we've published with this piece to sign up with a local chapter. Once you become more established assisting with TRR, all-expense-paid volunteer opportunities like the San Juan Women's Clinic open up. That's a sweet offer when pondering your options for those 10 vacay days you finally carved out, but data suggests that's the least important motive for voluntourists.

“We really bonded, becoming a true river family,” Donna described. “It was hard to say goodbye.”

Or take it from veteran Bridgette Ruppenthal, a past participant herself. “I will be forever grateful for the memories, the friends, the clean, crisp air, the running water, the beautiful canyon, the stars,” she recalled. For Bridgette, “The river doesn’t care if you’ve got nice clothes. The river just wants you to visit every now and again.”

Plus, participants styled their first Class III rapid.



“These are not beginners, but disciplined athletes,” says Greg Paquin of Waveology, describing mobility-challenged paddlers he guides. Greg, who has trained more than his fair share of AMCers, notes, “If they’re going on a trip like this, they’ve proven to someone, somewhere they have the skills and the stamina to do it.”

“They *want* to be challenged, to test their limits,” he added.

Early in his career, Greg was headlining at an international symposium when one of his participants showed up for a rolling clinic with only one “land” leg. “Now what am I supposed to do?” he fretted.

“No worries, mate,” quipped the boater. “The other one’s still there. We’ll show you how it goes,” coached the student. Turns out he was Rick Cooper, now world-renowned, advanced-rated British Canoeing coach and adventure guide. These days you’ll find Rick tide racing about the Breton peninsula, then beating it back home across the English Channel. “Know no boundaries” is Rick’s apt business tag line.

Greg Paquin's star pupil Rick Cooper, now a renowned BC certified adaptive guide, learned from his own mobility challenges.

Adaptive Adventure or Disneyland?

The inclusive sports movement is not without controversy.

Like Edward Abbey, some worry that wilderness access becomes an excuse to commercially plunder National Parks: the Grand Canyon with air trains or people movers for mass fun and profit.

Uninitiated observers may ask if the differently-abled belong in the risky world of expedition paddling, recalling the under-conditioned, over-paying clients who fatally burden Mount Everest summit teams.

But the American Canoe Association and British Canoeing offer sound responses.

As their websites and literature make plain, it's just another example

of diversity, like race, or gender, or class.

One in four Americans have a disability.

That's according to the CDC's definition: "any physical or mental impairment that has substantial and long-term negative effects on one's ability to do normal daily or major life activities."

It's about modifying equipment and people *to* nature, not the other way around, they argue. Hence, the great need for volunteers.

Didn't Dane Jackson, despite severe hearing loss, plunge his kayak over a 134-foot Chilean waterfall last month?

Dane Jackson kayaking Tomata 1 in Veracruz, Mexico. Photo by Alfredo Martinez / redbull.com



Didn't John Wesley Powell, bearing only one arm, — thanks to the Civil War—pull off the first cartographic study of the Green and Colorado rivers, all while hauling himself in and out of boats and up and down cliffs?

Adaptive specialists remind us there are all kinds of losses, internal anxieties, or crises-in-confidence that impede immersion into the wonders of river, lake, and sea.

“We need to see each paddler as an individual,” Greg explains.

Adventure healing.

One day on a week of Southern Rivers trip, a new paddling buddy ripped the scales from our eyes. Though once an accomplished Class IV boater, he now limits himself to mellow pleasures like the wild and sleepy Hiwasee River. He told us the hardest part of his adjustment was the difficulty in making friends.

“The virus turned my legs to spaghetti,” he teased, “It didn't lower my IQ.”

This is the kind of awareness conversation trickling down from ACA's Adaptive Summits to the watershed of the broader paddling community.

Anti-discrimination is the law; integration the ideal. As a club, many ask how we're doing.

A popular former club Class IV rater was completely deaf on the river, separated from her transistor aids. We all jump to assist canoe portages when aging — excuse me, over-usage! — hobbles hips and limbs.

Still, when it comes to inclusive paddling, we have a lot to learn.

As often happens, those who do not seek greater experience, may have it thrust upon them.

Learn More

Team River Runner

**American Canoe
Association**

Wilderness Inquiry

During one Canoe course we learned only on Day Two, mid-river, that our direction-giving was, “*Honestly, truly great!*” since, as the young man explained, his severe executive function disorder makes learning new sports “super frustrating.”

“When it comes to inclusive paddling, we have a lot to learn.”

It’s about equity. And dignity. It’s even a new marketing angle. But most of all, voluntourists will tell you, it’s about the human reward.

It’s Bridgette Ruppenthal saying, “This trip saved my life.”



PADDLE SPLASHES

Loretta Brady, Editor

Marty Plante, Layout & Format

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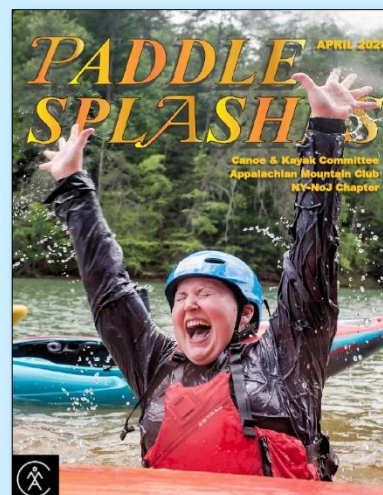
Guidelines for Submissions

Photos are preferred as high-resolution color jpeg files attached to email. Please do not crop, compress, resize or otherwise interfere with them. Contact the editor if you need assistance sending large files. Current and prior issues of PaddleSplashes are available on the Chapter’s website at <http://www.amc-ny.org/paddle-splashes>

Send all submissions to:

[canoekayak.newsletter <at> amc-ny.org](mailto:canoekayak.newsletter@amc-ny.org)

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Boston, MA



The Gifts of **CANCER** & **KAYAKING**

BY SUZANNE VILLEGAS

(aka SHAZAM)



Photo by Suzanne Villegas

In May of 2018, I had the honor of being a volunteer for a week with First Descents, which focuses on outdoor programs for young adults impacted by cancer.

From the time each of us, volunteers and participants, arrived at the Natahala Outdoor Center in the Great Smoky Mountains, First Descents took care of our every need/want/desire. Two other volunteers and myself were put up in a “humble” cabin with vaulted ceilings, full sized kitchen, washer/dryer, big screen TVs, king-sized beds, a showerhead bath, and an outdoor Jacuzzi. It was a “bit of an upgrade” from my usual paddling tent Taj Mahal, sleeping bag, camp stove, and porta potty at put in/take out.

First Descents participants are not obligated, at any time, to reveal their type of cancer. They are only obligated to show up. They pick a nickname for themselves and reveal which part of the USA they come from. Along the way, they begin to reveal so much more about their almost identical journeys, body issues, and doubts about their figuring out their “new normal” life.

As a proud member of the cult of whitewater kayakers, I thought I knew

it can bring to your life, but really seeing it through the eyes of those First Descent participants was an incredible gift.

On their first times: cramming their body into a boat, wet exits, vehicle shuttles, helmet hair, to pee or not to pee in a wetsuit, lunch breaks, wild animals spotted on the river, funky gear comments, etc., etc. All this combined with activities off the river that were beautiful: the delicious volunteer chef's food, campfire talks, daily awards and ceremonies, and my favorite game, in lieu of rock/paper/scissors: *Bear/Gun/Man* where ***Gun*** beats ***Bear***, ***Bear*** beats ***Man***, and ***Man*** beats ***Gun***.

At the end of the incredible week with First Descents, everyone was revealing their real names and their plans based on what is vs what if, and how they were finding their new “new normal” life. Saying goodbye was tough. It's tougher now because of what I would learn almost a year and a half later, when I received my own cancer diagnosis.

Cancer gives you the gift of almost immobilizing fears. A few of the many fears of cancer I have learned:

- death vs survival vs relapse
- not seeing gray hair
- being a burden to friends/family
- financial issues
- not knowing what you have left inside of you to give to yourself, much less anyone else.

Photos by First Descents



**Learn More About
First Descents**

**Donate to
Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center**



My wonderful team at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center had advised me to wait six-eight months post-op before resuming paddling. But I knew better than them because they aren't paddlers – yet. In spite of my anxiety, not having stamina, nor flexibility, and with random bouts of narcolepsy, four months was the most I could wait before I jumped back into the cult of whitewater kayaking.

It is my strong belief that cancer and kayaking have so much in common. They come with tons of support from people/organizations who circle the wagons and help each of us figure out our “new normal,” and I am forever grateful for these gifts.

Please consider giving of your time, money, and heart to First Descents.



*Thanks to all of our
2019 trip leaders,
paddling instructors and
other volunteers. You
made it a great year!*

Sean Ainechi
Loretta Brady
Rich Breton
Milana Buslovsky
Oleg Buslovsky
Paul Edwards
Russ Faller
Butch Futrell
Don Getzin
Naz Ghanbari

Lenny Grefig
Neil Grossman
Mary Ann
Brian Horowitz
Jennifer Koerner
Christian Lazo
Jake Lewis
Andrew Ludke
Klara Marton
Charles Michener

Marty Plante
Henry Schreiber
Sozanne Solmaz
Mark Tiernan
Chris Viani
Suzanne Villegas
Tim Watters
Eileen Yin

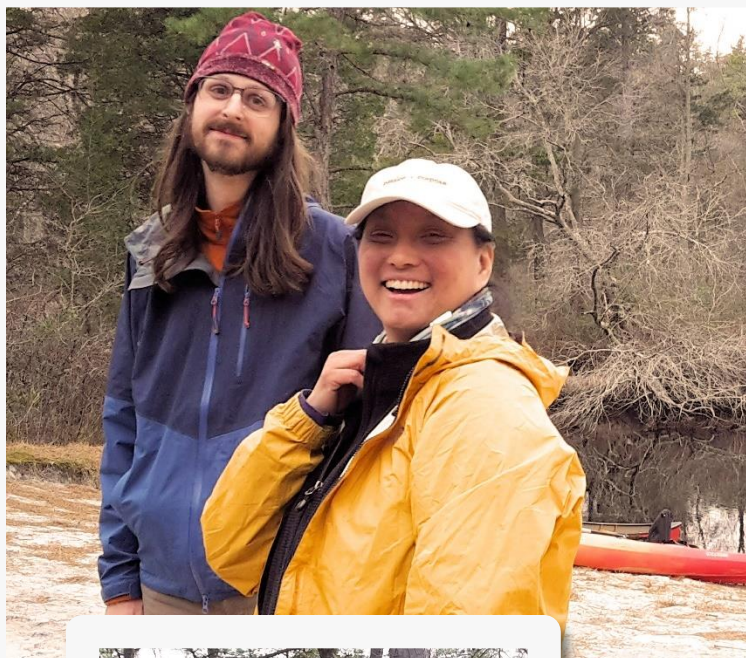


Photos by Loretta Brady

The Mullica River

Mar 14-15, 2020

In what turned out to be a parting celebration before the tripping pause button was hit, veteran and new members relished their March weekend on the Mullica River. Hikers waved and beavers splashed as the paddlers glided under the welcoming arms of cedar groves.



CHARLES *in charge*

After 20 years of paddling with the AMC, I'm thankful to have the opportunity to serve as chair for the NY-NoJ Canoe & Kayak Committee.

I have only one primary goal for the next two years: to increase participation in Canoe & Kayak Committee activities, boosting the paddler community as a whole.

I don't know how to do this, but I know I can't do it alone. I have already begun to depend upon the rest of the Canoe Kayak Committee in a big way. Let me say thank you to my fellow committee members. There would be no growth, no activities, and no fun without you!

These are some of the exciting things already in the works:

Increasing the fleet! We have purchased a Silverbirch solo whitewater canoe, plus a tandem canoe suitable for easy whitewater or expeditions. Really exciting is the addition of a light-weight tandem canoe suitable for longer trips when portages are in store. Additionally, we have gained four donated kayaks. These are all great additions to the club.

New Equipment! Next on tap is the new eight-canoe trailer. We also have new pop-up shelters and new stoves with more BTUs! Let's take this show on the road! I want to see all these new toys used, and that means we need *you* to come and use them.

Has it been a while since you led a trip? Is there a river or lake that we haven't paddled in a while and you miss? Have you been thinking you might like to become a paddlesport leader for the AMC? Now is the time! This is a call to action. We need leaders to run trips and carry the club forward in to the future.

Our schedule is growing! Knot & Lines is back. Basic Safety & Rescue is back. If you have never taken these classes or not in a while, well..... This year we already have twice the number of canoe instructionals than we had last year. I want to see the same increase with kayak instruction, otherwise I might be viewed as being biased towards canoes. I don't want that!

Now is not the time to ask what the club has done for you lately; instead, now is the time to ask what *you* have done for the club la



Meet the Team!

Klara Marton, Scheduler

canoekayak.scheduler@amc-ny.org



Klara started canoeing 4 or 5 years ago and is now the scheduler in our chapter's CKC. Her favorite trips are the ones in the wilderness. She very much enjoys going on trips that take multiple days; they remind her of childhood camps. ”

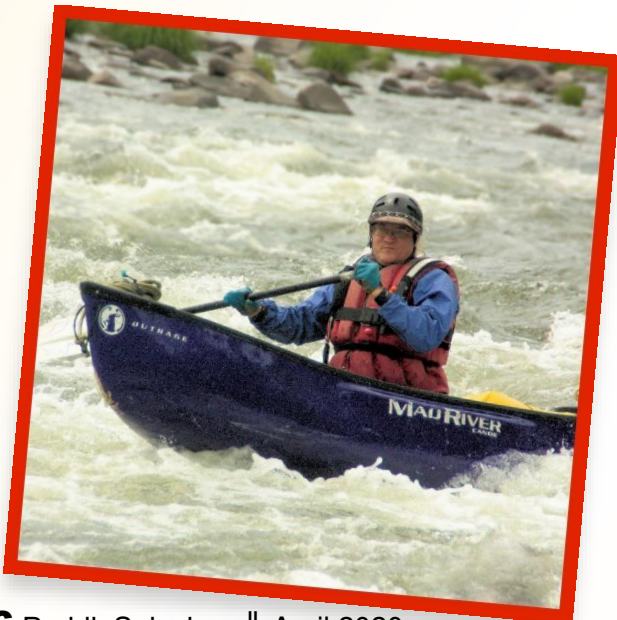


Charles Michener, Chair

canoekayak.chair@amc-ny.org



Charles didn't run fast enough to avoid being recruited, so he's now our new CKC Chair. A great accomplishment for someone who was once told he should write a note on the bottom of his boat because it was being seen more than the top! Charles lends his entrepreneurial experience and healing gifts to lead day, weekend, or weeklong scenic adventures. Now at the helm, his vision will steer the club to be bigger, better, faster, stronger. ”



Lynn Zemlin, Secretary

canoekayak.secretary@amc-ny.org



Lynn went from living aboard a 38-foot sailboat for three years to spending weekends in a 16-foot tandem canoe. What a happy transition. She sees so much more on the water thanks to AMC!



Loretta Brady, Leadership

canoekayak.leadership@amc-ny.org



She joined for the nature-loving, then stayed for the friends.

Whether coaxing you to write your own article for *PaddleSplashes*, design your own trip, or plot your own line, Loretta's philosophy is "lead from behind." For her the best part about a club is the col-

lective knowledge of the group. And with a committee like this one, she says, we're talking Dream Team.



Camilla Nivison, Social Media

canoekayak.publicity@amc-ny.org



Camilla began kayaking a couple of years ago, improving her skills under the tutelage of the CKC. While she prefers summer paddling, gray skies and freezing temps won't keep her off the water! Her favorite rivers include the Esopus (NY), Lower Yough (PA), French Broad and Pigeon (NC). When not in her boat, she can often be found with a backpack and trekking poles.



Marty Plante, Treasurer

canoekayak.treasurer@amc-ny.org



After a career of designing multimillion-dollar financial software systems, Marty now spends his time balancing the CKC's checkbook. When he's not adding credits and debits, he's usually playing in the Adirondack woods with his skis, hiking boots and disturbingly large collection of canoes.



Henry Schreiber, Leadership Training

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Henry has been paddling with the AMC 1986! Since that first trip, he has been a trip leader, C/K Committee member and chair, paddling and safety instructor/leader (ACA certified whitewater open canoe instructor). He has also taken many leadership roles within the Chapter and the Club, including Chapter Chair and member of the Board of Directors. Rejoining the CKC after many years is exciting and I look forward to working with the other members.



Jenny Yang, Outreach

Hyejin90@gmail.com



Jenny got her starting in canoeing with the AMC's Youth Opportunities Program on a two-day river expedition along the Delaware River. While still not confident in her skills as a paddler, she is passionate about exposing NYC residents – old and young – to the wonders of the outdoors. With her work in the club on the CKC, she hopes to expand access to the great outdoors to everybody as she works on her own paddling skills.





Lee Trimble, Quartermaster

canoekayak.quartermaster@amc-ny.org

“ Lee discovered the AMC paddling a year ago. It has been 45 years since he last ventured down the mighty Delaware in a battered aluminum canoe. Another six since he returned to dirt dwelling after living aboard a restored sailboat with his wife Lynn and trusty boat-dog Maggie. He’s grateful to be back on the water in the company of the dedicated AMC paddlers. ”

EDITOR NEEDED

For Trails & Waves Newsletter

Immediate Opening



The Chapter's quarterly newsletter, *Trails & Waves*, is in need of a new editor. You'll develop story ideas, write articles, coax others to write articles, and edit and proofread them with your awesome command of the written word. There's no pay, benefits or advancement, but you'll be the envy of your fellow AMCs. Interested? Contact Rick Bryan at vicechair@amc-ny.org .



OUR NEW TRIP LEADER GRADUATES

Milana Buslovsky started paddling whitewater three years ago, becoming a frequent participant and later advancing to trip organizer of class II events on the Esopus Creek and Deerfield River's Fife Brook section. She coordinated trips on the Delaware River for beginning paddlers and has been assisting in two-day instruction classes on the Lehigh River,



providing support, advice and explanations to students both, on the water and during equipment selection and fitting. Although all of us have busy lives and at times it seems impossible to break away from a daily routine and shake off piling-up stress, the AMC trips are the best remedy for recharging batteries by participating in challenging activities, sharing experiences, learning new skills or techniques, and, most importantly, spending great time with dear friends and meeting new amazing people sharing similar interests.

Oleg Buslovsky is greatly enjoying the thrill of whitewater kayaking and is very eager to share this experience and excitement with other paddlers, both skilled and beginners. In any situation you can count on his practical advice and physical support. Although Oleg pursues Class II/III paddling on Esopus Creek, Deerfield's Zoar Gap, Mongaup for fun and challenge, he enthusiastically supports instructional and beginner trips on the Delaware and Lehigh to involve other people in the outdoors activity that he loves. Camping with fellow paddlers and sharing meals and stories at the campfire is one of the memorable features that come in a package that make AMC paddling trips worth experiencing.



Ivan Schwartz “It ain’t bragging if it’s true,” as the saying goes. But in Ivan’s case, you’ve gotta pry even that truth from him. It took a few seasons since that first time he ambled into our campsite party at Sleepy Hollow for him to hint at his wide-ranging experiences. Ivan gets his epic on not only splashing about in challenging white and sea waters, but also training hard-core in group boot camps. New boaters beg him to be escort down the Esopus Creek or Lehigh River, so be sure to join his trips to those classics. He’s also an enthusiastic expeditionist, heading out this season to paddle about Scotland. Any takers?



Western PA Solo Canoe Rendezvous

*Slippery Rock, PA
June 5-7, 2020*

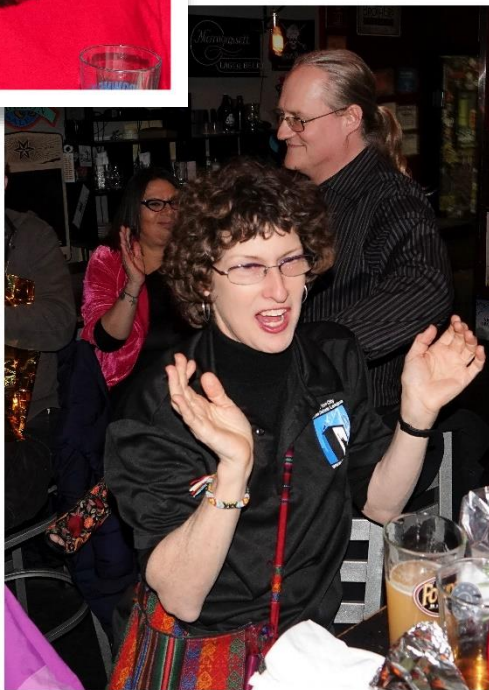
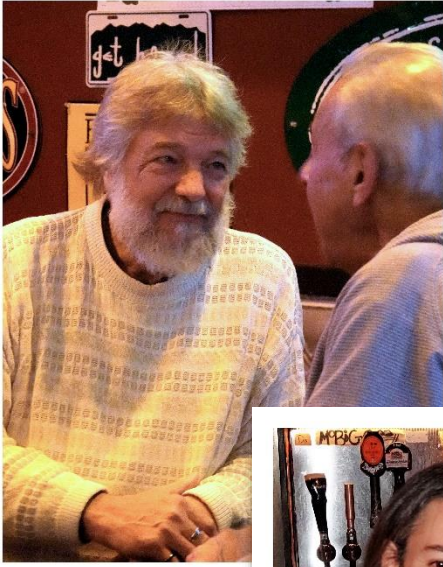


Click for Details

Paddlers Party

Dec 7, 2019

Photos by
Milana Buslovsky



Thank you to all leaders, and to those who missed the party and our gifts of gratitude and treats, and heartfelt ***Thanks!*** to these leader award winners:



Neil Grossman

Most newbie leaders upgraded!



Brian Horowitz

AMC Adventure Leader & Nat'l Canoe Safety Patrol



Mary Ann Hoag

Best conservation trips!



Milana Buslovsky

Most new trips AND photographs!

2019 Appie of the Year:

Loretta Brady

Who is the kindest, most generous volunteer you know? Who leads the most paddling trips year after year while still finding time to mentor new paddlers and leaders? Who consistently gives so much of herself for the benefit of the AMC, the Canoe & Kayak Committee (CKC), and every single person in the paddling community?

You guessed it! LORETTA BRADY.

We all know how much Loretta has contributed to the AMC. And now the entire New York-North-Jersey Chapter has acknowledged her extraordinary contributions, too!

Loretta was awarded the 2019 NY-NoJ Chapter Appie of the Year Award at the Chapter's Annual Meeting & Dinner on January 4, 2020 held at City College.

Appie of the Year is the highest honor the chapter can bestow upon any volunteer and recognizes an individual's long-standing contribution to the overall chapter. Only one individual is awarded this honor each year.

Loretta is the heart and soul of the Canoe & Kayak Committee. She serves on the CKC as the Leadership Chair, mentoring our new trip leaders, and is one of our most active instructors and leaders. She has also served as Secretary of the Chapter's Executive Committee, offering thoughtful and fresh ideas about the chapter's growth.

Since 2012, Loretta has been the Editor, along with Marty Plante (another Appie of the Year) of our beloved *PaddleSplashes*. This newsletter brings together the paddling community like nothing else. Her historical articles, snappy bios and fun feature stories connect our spectrum of paddlers, from folks with more stories than paddling days to newbies just getting their feet wet.

Every recently authorized CKC leader and newbie paddler knows Loretta as a super encouraging mentor who led or co-led more than 70 trips! Loretta is always there to guide new leaders as they plan their first trips and she's always ready to create a trip so new paddlers can get time in the water.

We are so lucky to have Loretta as part of the AMC and CKC.

Eileen and Loretta at the Chapter's Annual Meeting. Photo by Milana Buslovsky.



BOAT DEMO DAY

Sat, May 9, 2020

Jamaica Bay

Click for Details

AMC New York – North Jersey CHAPTER PICNIC

Corman AMC Harriman Outdoor Center

Sat, Jun 6, 2020

Click for Details

Parting Shots

beer & boats in advertising

