In memoriam: David L. Spangler (1946–2020)

THE LAKE ERIE community is saddened by the passing of David L. Spangler, a gentle soul and beloved charter boat captain who fiercely devoted many of the final years of his life to educating others about the science of algal blooms, efforts to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes, and why the 30 million Americans and 10 million Canadians who live in the Great Lakes basin deserve better water quality in general.

Dave, who lived along the Lake Erie shoreline near Oak Harbor, Ohio, was well-known among and highly respected by many of the International Association for Great Lakes Research's leading scientists.

He died of leukemia on Oct. 21 at Heroes Harbor Hospice, part of the Cleveland Veterans Administration Medical Center.

"Dave and I fed off each other. I mean, we really did," his long-time counterpart, Paul Pacholski, told The (Toledo) Blade for a news obituary published the day after his death. "Without question, he made me a better person and a better advocate."

Pacholski is the longtime president of the Lake Erie Charter Boat Association. As the same group's longtime vice president, Spangler was his right-hand man.

Tributes have poured in from past and current governors, members of Congress, and other dignitaries.

Dave was "an enthusiastic supporter of all the work we do," noted IAGLR member George Bullerjahn of Bowling Green State University.

"A day on the water with Dave was fun, enlightening, and always led to a successful research trip. I looked forward to catching up with him at all the conferences we have held. The fact he attended every meeting shows how much he cared about the lake and our research," Bullerjahn said.



Dave Spangler along the Lake Erie shoreline across from the University of Toledo Lake Erie Center on Aug. 14, 2019. Photo courtesy of The (Toledo) Blade/Tom Henry.

We "have lost a voice of reason among those concerned with Lake Erie," said Ohio Sea Grant/Ohio State University Stone Laboratory Director Chris Winslow. "Dave will be missed, but we can remember him in our words, actions, and efforts going forward."

That sentiment was echoed by Justin Chaffin, Ohio Sea Grant/OSU Stone Laboratory research coordinator, who called Dave "a true champion for Lake Erie sport fishing and water quality."

Chaffin added, "It was a pleasure working with Dave on research projects and then chatting with him about hot spots and baits for walleye after our business was completed. He understood that fishing success and water quality are tightly connected. He and his advocacy for Lake Erie will be missed."

Mike McKay, executive director of the University of Windsor's Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research, lauded Spangler and Pacholski for the citizen science sampling program they initiated in 2012 with help from other charter boat captains.

Samples drawn simultaneously by charter boat captains give the Ohio EPA and other agencies field data from a vast expanse of the lake on the same date and at the same time, information the agencies otherwise wouldn't have.

McKay was pleased Spangler worked closely with so many IAGLR members.

Tom Bridgeman, the University of Toledo Lake Erie Center's director, said he "had the greatest respect and affection for Dave," and BGSU's Tim Davis called him "a tireless advocate for Lake Erie."

by Tom Henry, The (Toledo) Blade