

2017 Verlen Kruger Award Presentation

Before we draw today's winning Raffle Grand Prize ticket, we need to take a few minutes to honor and remember Verlen Kruger. Verlen died in 2004 but what you see around you today was in great part inspired by him. His epic canoe trips inspired many to do what they might once have considered impossible.

We remember Verlen through the work of his friends, including Mike and Dan Smith, Kruger Awards 2008, who created the Verlen Kruger Memorial in Portland. We also remembered him by presenting the Verlen Kruger Award. The Kruger Award has been given annually since 2003.

I ask past Kruger Award winners to raise their hands. (Recognize Jim Woodruff, Karl Pearson, Charlie Parmalee, Jay Hanks, Russ Hicks). These are the people to thank for inspiring us to get outside and learn who we are inside.

One person who has never failed to inspire those around him is the 2017 Verlen Kruger Award winner. Dean Sandell helped plan the first Quiet Water Symposium in 1996. Prior to that, he created the Island Explorer's Water Trail in the St. Marys River with Lime Island as the host island. This work was supported by the Forest Recreation Advisory Committee though a subcommittee chaired by Karl Pearson, Kruger Award 2009.

In 1992, he was a USA team member of Superior - Baikal Connect an international team, led by John Andersen, Duluth, MN, that included Canadians and Russians who paddled in both Lake Superior and Lake Baikal. The team also included Verlen Kruger and was featured in a 1993 West Michigan Coastal Kayaker newsletter.

In 1993, Dean helped support the Finlandia Clean Water Challenge, a 1,000 mile canoe/kayak race from Chicago to New York. If you ever get the chance, ask Dean how that went. It is the stuff that legends are made from. Are any Finlandia paddlers here today? (One recognized, Jay Hanks, Kruger Award 2012)

In 1996, Dean hosted the Great Lakes Regional Water Trail Conference near Sault Ste Marie, Canada that included national leaders like Andy Knapp, Dave Getchell with Verlen Kruger as the keynote speaker.

His efforts to promote water trails lead to a proclamation, signed by Gov. John Engler in 2002. An unfunded mandate, yes, but it planted the seed for what we see today.

Verlen said, “Happy are those that dream dreams, and have the courage to make them come true.” Dean is a dreamer. He sees the invisible. That which does not exist, yet. Communities along the Grand River are coming together to make water trails a reality. The vision that few shared in 1991 was kept alive by a few who like Dean never gave up. For that we thank him and honor him with the 2017 Verlen Kruger Award’

(read from plaque)

The Verlen Kruger Award
Presented at the 2017 Quiet Water Symposium to
Dean Sandell

Working within the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Dean Sandell was an early advocate for Michigan water trails. Working with other visionaries, he helped get public funding for the Michigan Heritage Water Trails Program in 2002, and then consulted on the designs of a water trail on the St. Joseph’s River, the Tip of the Mitt, and around Drummond Island. Dean was one of the first two landscape architects hired to join the foresters in the MDNR. He is also an avid outdoorsman, paddler, and an award winning photographer. His experience as an educator dedicated to the wise use of our state and nation’s natural resources has helped to bring our water resources to new generations of paddling enthusiasts.

With this award, the Quiet Water Society celebrates Dean Sandell’s long service to paddlers and campers in enjoying and restoring the waters we share.

- Paddle from Allen Deming, Mackinaw Watercraft
- Brick for Kruger Memorial in Portland
- Honor roll at AuSable River Center in Roscommon

Thank you to all for helping us honor Dean.

Presented on March 4, 2017 by QWS President, Gary De Kock