



Oneida Lake Association
PO Box 3536 Syracuse, NY 13220-3536
president@oneidalakeassociation.org



REMEMBERING TONY BUFFA

~by Matt Snyder, Past President, Oneida Lake Association

Tony Buffa, a longtime Director on the Oneida Lake Association Board of Directors and one of Oneida Lake's and Lake Ontario's most respected fishing guides, passed away on June 13. Calling hours will be Monday, June 23 from 4-7 p.m. at Pirro Funeral Home and the full obituary is online at Syracuse.com.

Following is a remembrance of Tony from an OLA director and fisherman who was mentored and befriended by him over several decades:

As a kid who grew up in a fanatical walleye and perch fishing family, I knew who Tony Buffa was from the time I could start an outboard. My early mentors in fishing were old timers like Herb Laurie, Bill Schiess, Phil Gustke and Chuck Chaponas. I clearly remember those guys talking with the deepest respect for Capt. Tony and his walleye jigging program.

When I was in my teens, my father joined the OLA Board of Director. Tony, who joined the Board in the year of my birth, immediately welcomed Dad and by extension our entire family as his brothers and sisters in conservation. In the culture of Oneida Lake, my first time shaking hands with Tony was not unlike meeting Elvis, or the Pope.

As we mourn Tony's untimely passing from the scourge of cancer, I want to share a few more memories of Tony to highlight what he meant to our lake, its fishery, and the people who care about them:

*When I joined the OLA Board in 2002, it was Tony who first welcomed me with open arms—and put me right to work as his “go-fer” on the Annual Meeting Committee which he chaired ably for more than 25 years, and emceed for more years than anyone on our Board can count.

*In my first term as President, the Board was debating the merits of a new

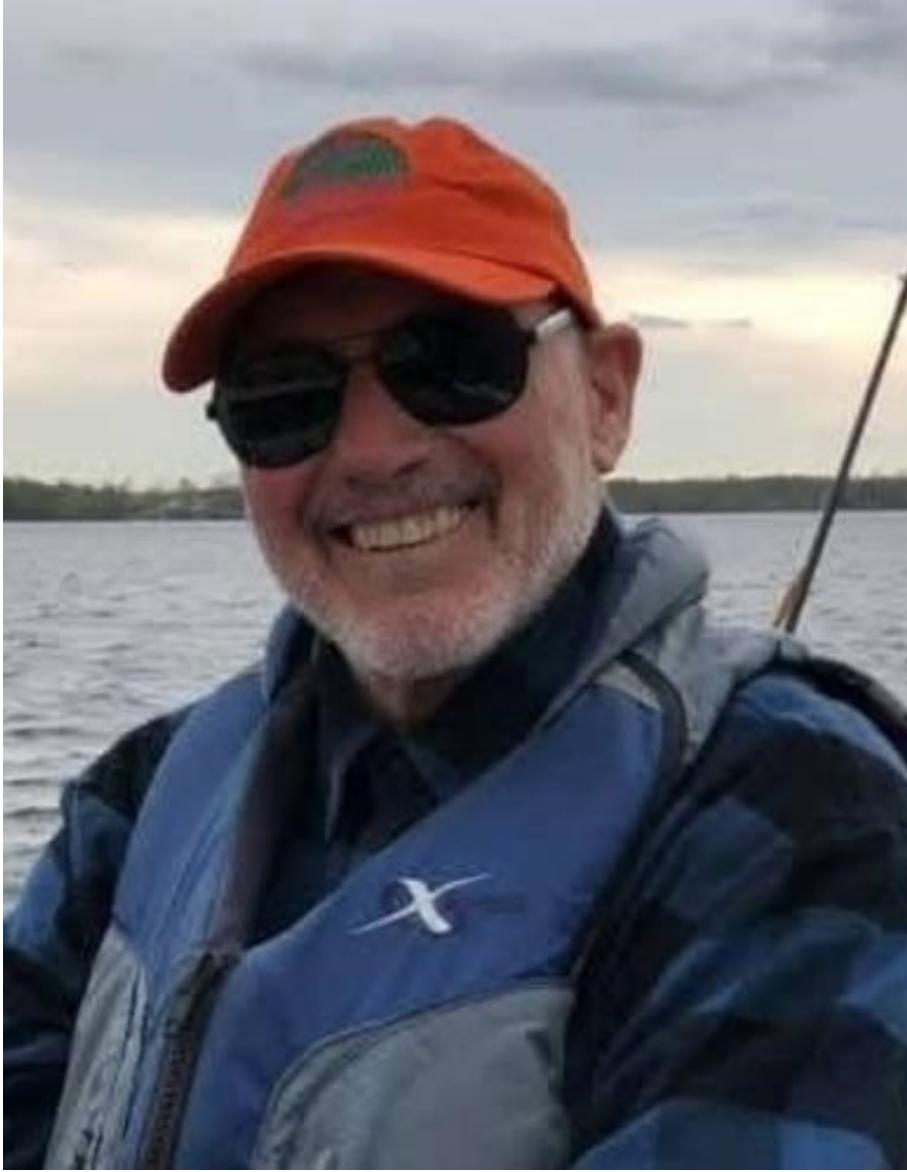
candidate for a Director's position. Tony, as usual, listened much more than he spoke. When he did open up, it was to say, "I've known this guy since he was a little kid. He's a hell of a fisherman and a hell of a conservationist and he cares passionately about this lake." That was the end of all debate, and that Director has been one of our most productive and beneficial members of the Board!

*When the Board presented Dr. John Forney with the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Conservationist of the Year Award, Tony spoke eloquently about what it meant for him to meet Dr. Forney for the first time. The Captain's passionate appreciation of science-based conservation shone through every conversation he ever had about Oneida Lake, whether on board My Gal Cal or in meetings with elected officials and stakeholders.

*In 2023, when Tony presented me with the Conservationist of the Year award, he went to great trouble to keep it a surprise. I'll never forget the gleam in his eye when he leaned over from the podium and whispered, "Gotcha, pal!"

*And finally, this April, when we visited Tony at Crouse Hospital to present him with his 2025 Conservationist of the Year Award, he was just as surprised as I had been. But he smiled his usual smile and said, "Don't worry, I'll be on the water soon, I just had the boat painted and re-upholstered and she'll be ready to go!"

Sadly, we now know that Tony's next fishing trip will be plying the placid, heavenly waters. But joyously, we should all know and celebrate how much OLA members' prayers and well wishes meant to him. I've never known anyone so inspired by the people around him, the conservation of Oneida Lake, and the joys of passing the stewardship of our lake's bounties to the next generation. Rest in Pisces, friend.



Captain Tony Buffa

KEEP SMILING!

As most of you know, Tony Buffa was the long-time host of the OLA's Annual Membership Meeting. He kept the meeting on track, handled questions from the audience, and delivered his remarks with his usual grace and enthusiasm. His robust version of the Pledge of Allegiance always stirred the crowd! Few people know that Tony also took charge of much of the planning and prep for the meeting. It was truly his show!

This April, when Tony's illness prevented him from filling his Emcee duties, it took about six of us to check all of the boxes that Tony usually accomplished on his own. And when the question of Emcee came up, somehow the Board turned on me. My response was, "You think I want to follow that act!?" It's like being in the dugout at Yankee Stadium and hearing, "Now batting for Aaron Judge. . ." Gulp.

So I called up Tony the night before the meeting and had a great chat. Of course, I asked him, "Tony, I've got to fill in for you tomorrow night. Tell me,

what's the Secret Sauce? What advice do you have for me?"

His response was short and powerful. "Keep smiling," he said.

I should have known. Keep smiling.

~John Harmon

OLA Scholarship Winner!

The Board of Directors is pleased to announce the winner of this year's scholarship.

The **OLA Scholarship in Memory of Eugene Kadlubowski** goes to Michelle Brissette, a senior at P. V. Moore High School in Central Square. Michelle will attend Paul Smith's College in the fall.

Michelle writes to tell us: "I was honored to receive the 2025 Oneida Lake Association Scholarship Award. The presenter was thoughtful and kind. I will be attending Paul Smith's College in the fall for Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. My goal is to become a DEC Officer and return to the area to protect our abundant natural resources. This scholarship will allow me to purchase the equipment necessary to begin my course of study. Please know that it is greatly appreciated and will enhance my college experience.



OLA Director Patricia Cerro-Reehil had the pleasure of presenting this award to Michelle during the high school's Awards Night.



Weed Pull Opportunities It's Fun!

One of the most appreciated activities of the OLA Directors is our commitment to pulling water chestnuts in weed infested areas of the lake. Here is our schedule for this summer. Come join us!



**Looking for Volunteers! Do you like to Kayak and pull weeds?
If so, please consider helping!**

The Oneida Lake Association in conjunction with the Oswego & Oneida County Soil & Water Conservation Districts will be coordinating Water Chestnut Weed Pulls on the dates below. Please email Patricia Cerro-Reehil at pcr@reehil.com, or call 315-727-5160, if you are interested in helping out! Please be prepared to bring your own kayak or canoe and life jacket.

Thursday & Friday, July 10 & 11 @ Johnnies, 3653 State Route 31, Canastota – 8:00 am - Noon

Thursday & Friday, July 17-18 @ Metzger's Pond, Corner of Kibbie Lake Road & Tannery Road, Constantia – 8:00 am - Noon

Thursday & Friday, July 24-25 – South Shore Location – 8:00 – Noon – Location: TBA



**DEC Spotlight:
Slime Darts
(Chain Pickerel)**

Species Spotlight: Chain Pickerel

Scientific Name: *Esox niger*

Nicknames: Grass pike, slime darts

Current State Record: 8 lbs. 1 oz., Toronto Reservoir (Sullivan County), 2/13/65

Identification: Chain-like markings down sides, dark vertical bar under eye, cheek and gill cover fully scaled

Where to Fish: Shallow, weedy areas of lakes, ponds and rivers

How to Fish: Typically pickerel are not sought after by anglers and are usually caught when targeting other fish like bass and sunfish. Spinnerbaits, crank baits, jigs and soft plastics are all usually effective. Try bright colors, especially white! If you want to try fishing for pickerel it's a good idea to use a steel leader so their sharp teeth can't slice through your line.

Safe Handling: As previously mentioned, these small members of the Pike Family have very sharp teeth so never stick your hands in their mouths! Having tools such as long pliers and jaw spreaders can help when removing hooks. It's also a good idea to carry hook cutters in case a hook is difficult to remove or has been lodged in a gill. They're also **very** slimy making them even more challenging to hold. Being careful to avoid touching their gills, firmly grip their gill plate (covering) with one hand and support the back of their body with the other, as seen in the picture below.

Fish Fact: Considered "lie in wait" predators, chain pickerel hide in vegetation until they're ready to ambush their prey.



The Mission of the Oneida Lake Association is to protect the fisheries, wildlife, and natural resources of Oneida Lake by promoting science-based conservation and management through education and outreach, in partnership with our members and local communities.

Pay your dues, and HELP PROTECT ONEIDA LAKE!!!!

\$8 annually

Donate



Memorials and contributions to our program are most welcome.

OLA is a 501(c)4 organization serving and protecting the Oneida Lake environment.



[OLA Website](#)

OLA is a 501(c)(4) not-for-profit organization.

The Oneida Lake Association is a member of the New York State Conservation Council <http://www.nyscc.com/> and the New York State Federation of Lake Associations <http://www.nysfola.org/>.

Please remember to obey all laws, rules, regulations, and codes of ethics as they pertain to boating, fishing, hunting, and the management of Oneida Lake and its tributaries.

Report environmental violations.

1-844-DEC-ECOS (1-844-332-3267)

Oneida Lake Association | P.O. Box 3536 | Syracuse, NY 13220 US

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