The Breeze

January 2026

Vol. 87, No. 1

Lake George Cottagers Association, President Matt Minnick

Anticipation for the Season

As I write this in mid-December, I am struck by the unusual weather patterns we have experienced. The lake is currently thawing after an exceptionally early cold snap. In fact, I recently received this photo, which was taken on Lake George in early December.

The image features an ice fishing shelter situated near the center of the basin. In my family's 63 years on the lake, I cannot recall the water ever freezing over to such an extent at this time of year. It truly is a remarkable sight and a testament to the unpredictability of nature.

Board Activities and Meeting Updates
Your Lake George Cottagers board has been actively involved throughout the fall and winter seasons. We have held several meetings to prepare for the upcoming 2026 lake season. Our board is dedicated to ensuring that all major holiday events are thoughtfully planned and executed. Saturday, July 4, will be our featured weekend, with fireworks, a boat parade, and other events.

Community Engagement and Partnerships
We are committed to maintaining the tranquility of Lake George. To do so, we are proactively staying engaged with local law enforcement agencies, elected officials, other lake associations, and environmental organizations. These efforts are crucial to preserving the character and peace of our beloved lake for all residents and visitors.

Lake George Conservancy District – 2025 Year in Review

The Lake George Conservancy District (LGCD) concluded a successful 2025 with the completion of the Lake George Dam Project. The project was finished on schedule, with final costs coming in $49,000 under the approved $1,500,000 budget. The initial loan payment of $90,000 was made to Steuben County in June 2025, with 19 annual payments remaining.

LGCD continued its ongoing efforts to monitor and manage invasive aquatic plant species throughout the lake. During 2025, approximately 80 acres were identified and treated for Starry Stonewort. No areas of Eurasian Milfoil were identified or required treatment during the year.

Assessments for 2026 will remain unchanged from 2025: $50 for invasive weed treatment and $200 for dam maintenance and note repayment.

Current Board Members:
John Ranshaw, Chairman Dave Sorg, Vice Chairman Rex Melchi, Treasurer Jim Getz, Secretary Bob Boyles, Member at Large

Dave Sorg will retire from the Board in 2026 after many years of exemplary service. The Board will begin a search in the spring with the goal of appointing a new board member by summer 2026. All Indiana residents of the Conservancy District are eligible to serve on the LGCD Board. For more information, please contact Chairman John Ranshaw at 847-922-7814.

Cottagers Association Updates

2026 Fireworks

The Cottagers are currently facing several challenges regarding the 2026 fireworks events. One significant concern is the impact of inflation, which is affecting the overall cost of the fireworks show. Although there is a three-year contract in place with the fireworks vendor, the contract does not guarantee a fixed price. Instead, it secures only the event date, leaving costs subject to market changes.

Tariffs have led to an increase in expenses, raising the cost of the fireworks show by $2,500. In addition, the board has approved enhancements to the Grand Finale for the America250 celebration. This special upgrade will result in an additional $4,000 being spent on fireworks for 2026. It is important to note that this larger Grand Finale is a one-year arrangement specifically for the America250 celebration.

Given these rising costs, Cottagers are encouraged to consider increasing their 2026 donations toward the fireworks fund. Additional contributions will help offset the higher expenses and ensure the continued success of the event.

As in 2025, the fireworks show in 2026 will begin at a slightly earlier time. Attendees are advised to plan accordingly for the adjusted schedule.

Lake George Directory Management Changes

In 2025, the Association experienced significant changes regarding the management of the Lake George Directory. Previously, an outside vendor was responsible for soliciting advertisers who supported the publication and printing of the directory. This service was provided for a fee. However, the individual who handled this role relocated out of the county, resulting in a transition of responsibilities. During 2025, the firm that managed the directory's printing also took on the task of ad solicitation. Unfortunately, they have since decided that they will no longer offer this service.

For the 2026 edition, the Board of Directors (BOD) has determined that it will oversee the ad solicitation process directly. It is important to note that this is intended as a short-term solution while longer-term options are considered.

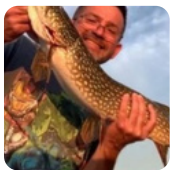
The BOD is actively discussing the future of the Lake George Directory. Options currently under consideration include continuing with the printed version, transitioning to a web-based edition, or discontinuing the directory altogether. No decisions have been made at this time, and the board encourages members to share their thoughts and feedback regarding the directory's future direction.

If you are interested in participating in the production of future Lake George Directories, please contact Matt Minnick. His contact information can be found in the current directory.

Cottagers Board Members for 2026

Matt Minnick, President

Matt and Julie bought on Lake George in 2015, after spending many summers visiting parents who bought their cottage in 1962. They have three grown children, two daughters-in-law, and several grandchildren. Matt can be seen piloting their pontoon after 6:30 many evenings.



Chris Porsch, Vice President

The Porsch family has been on Lake George since 1940, when Chris's great-grandfather bought 6 lots on Browns Point West. He and his wife Leigh Ann purchased the home from Chris' parents in 2020 and are now the fourth generation to live here. Chris works full-time but is often out fishing and working in the yard.

Kathy Adamonis, Treasurer

Kathy grew up in Delton, a small town in southwest Michigan. She taught at Battle Creek Public Schools for 21 years and currently teaches 6th grade at Legg Middle School in Coldwater. In March, 2020, she married John and they bought a house at Lake George. They love lake life and the small-town feel.

Pat Schlosser, Secretary

Pat and her husband Kevin bought their cottage on Kope Kon in 2004. They quickly fell in love with life at Lake George, adding on to their cottage as their kids grew. In 2023, they razed the cottage and built a permanent home, providing more room for their children and grand-children to visit and stay.

Lake George Conservancy, President Mike Gepfert

Your Lake George Conservancy Board had a productive 2025. While we bid farewell to some Directors, we welcomed a new slate of enthusiastic and passionate neighbors who care deeply about Lake George and the mission of the Conservancy. If you aren't familiar with the Lake George Conservancy, our mission, membership, our Directors, or our activities, please visit our new website: lakegeorgeconservancy.com, or seek out a Director and have a conversation. Below is a quick recap of some of our activities.

Planning for the Future

Late last year, the Conservancy came together for a series of strategic planning sessions to refine our goals and chart a clear path forward in preserving and protecting our beautiful lake. Spearheaded by board member John Ranshaw and past president John Albright, the Board participated in three thoughtful sessions focused on open dialogue, collaboration, and long-term planning. This shared effort resulted in a focused strategy built around four core priorities: Land Acquisition and Management, Communication and Education, Financial Sustainability, and Board Governance, all working together to support a healthy lake and a strong community for generations to come.

Protecting the Watershed

Also in the fall, the Conservancy acquired a seven-acre parcel adjacent to Old Highway 27, an important buffer for our watershed. The home previously on the property was removed shortly before Christmas, allowing the land to be restored as a sanctuary for local wildlife. With the work planned over the next couple of years, this natural space will serve as a protective filter for water runoff, helping reduce the risk of pollutants reaching the lake.

Thanks to the generous support of our community and the Zaremba Family, this land was preserved from proposed development of storage units and will instead remain a vital part of keeping our lake healthy and protected. We are deeply grateful to everyone whose donations made this acquisition possible.

Sharing Our Stories For Generations

New and still in development, the Lake George Conservancy is creating a space to share the stories that make our community unique. Our new website, lakegeorgeconservancy.com, will soon feature a Generations page dedicated to preserving family histories and memories connected to Lake George. Known as a truly generational lake, Lake George has long been a place where cottages, traditions, and stories are passed down through families.

We invite you to help us preserve this shared history. Simply write your story and email it to LG.Generations@yahoo.com, along with up to three photos (please attach each file separately). While the Generations page is still under development, it's never too early to begin capturing your memories, especially during the quiet winter months. As submissions are received, stories will be added to the website. Your story will help ensure Lake George's legacy is preserved for generations to come.

We appreciate the support from the LG community - this is your Conservancy.

If you are not yet a member, please consider joining your neighbors in our collective effort to preserve this beautiful natural resource. 2026 Conservancy Memberships are $50 (Individual) or $125 (Family). Payments may be made securely online at: https://lakegeorgeconservancy.com/membership-donation/. Checks may also be mailed with a note indicating "membership dues" to: Lake George Conservancy, PO Box 564, Fremont, IN 46737

Sincerely,
Mike Gepfert, President

YES… WE KNOW IT'S CONFUSING. HERE'S THE SCOOP…

MI COTTAGER'S ASSOCIATION IN

Oversees:
Lake Activities & Events
Fireworks
Lake Safety & DNR Patrols
Water Testing & Safety
Lake George Directory

LAKE GEORGE CONSERVANCY

Oversees:
Land Acquisition &
Management of Properties
Protection of Watershed
Lake George Boutique
BBQ Chicken Fundraiser
Fall Family Picnic

LAKE GEORGE CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

Oversees:
Lake George Dam
Maintenance & Safety

Annual Treatment for
Invasive Weeds

A shared commitment—Neighbors working together to protect the lake we love.

May 23: LGCA Beach Director's Meeting
May 24: Light Up The Lake
June 12-13: Annual Garage Sale Days
June 20: LG Conservancy Annual Meeting
July 4: BBQ Chicken Sale, Boat Parade & Fireworks
July 11: LG Cottagers Association Annual Meeting
July 11: LG Conservancy District Annual Meeting
August 22: LG Conservancy Fall Family Picnic
September 5: LGCA Beach Director's Meeting
September 6: Labor Day Luminaries

2026 EVENTS

Georgie Girl Has Come Home

Since the first dam was built in 1836 to power the original saw mill, the original three lakes became the current Lake George, as we know it. Navigation of the lake has continued to change.

At the end of the 19th century, through the "Baby Boom" years, boating on Lake George was dominated by a unique class of boats that became a trademark of Lake George. In the 1890's, one of the first cottagers (some say the first), Fred Pifer, used his logging experience to visualize and invent the double-hulled rowboat. This design became popular because it was virtually untippable and unsinkable. In addition to Fred Pifer, several others (including Fred's son Cary and O.J. Arnold) used his design to continue providing this class of boat to the ever-growing Lake George community. It's estimated by some of the LG old timers, that by the 1930's and 40's this design made up 80% of the boats on the lake.

L-R: Pete, Max, Bonnie, and Eugene Melchi
(Mike's Grandfather)

Eventually, more powerful boats have taken the place of rowboats, but a few individuals have the desire to preserve this history unique to Lake George.

Don Helton (Clear Lake) found and painstakingly rebuilt the double rowboat that he named "Georgie Girl." She was named after his wife Pat's history and fond memories of her previous time spent at Lake George. When Don and Pat needed the space, they reluctantly decided to part with the boat.

Fifth-generation Lake Georger, Mike Melchi, also has the desire to preserve the history enjoyed by his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. Mike, Lindsey, and family are now the proud owners of "Georgie Girl" and have happily brought her back home to Lake George.

L-R: Lindsey, Haley, Jake, and Mike Melchi

Lake George Boutique, Manager Jana Gepfert

A heartfelt thank you to everyone for your continued support of the boutique. Thanks to our community, we enjoyed another successful year, with proceeds reinvested directly into our lake community to support the care and maintenance of our beautiful properties and ongoing Conservancy initiatives.

Looking ahead to summer 2026, volunteers are always welcome to help on Saturday mornings. It's a wonderful way to meet fellow lake residents while supporting the important work of the Conservancy. If you're interested in volunteering, please email **4gepferts@gmail.com**.

Boutique hours will remain the same this season: Saturdays, Memorial Day through Labor Day, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. A special *Preview Day* will be held on the Saturday before Memorial Day.

The Boutique is located at 1042 South Angola Road, Coldwater, MI

S·C·L·C Steuben County Lakes Council: Protecting Our Water Resources

The Steuben County Lakes Council (SCLC) stands as a cornerstone in the effort to safeguard the environmental well-being of Steuben County. This local, volunteer-based, non-profit organization is dedicated to addressing and mitigating threats to the water quality across the region.

The SCLC is responsible for managing the countywide water quality testing program. Each year, the Council contracts and oversees the testing of the county's lakes, ensuring that any risks to water quality are identified and addressed.

Like many organizations, the SCLC faces challenges in maintaining financial stability amid inflation and reductions in government funding. As a result, they increasingly take on larger roles in monitoring sources of groundwater pollution throughout the county.

Community involvement is crucial to the continued success of the SCLC. If you are concerned about the future environmental health of Lake George, joining the SCLC is a direct way to support their ongoing efforts. In addition to supporting the Lake George Conservancy, your membership in the SCLC can make a meaningful impact with an annual membership of only $45.

To learn more about the SCLC or to join for 2026, please visit: **lakescouncil.org**

Lake George Regional Sewer District News

Everything has been calm this winter for the LGRSD as one would wish for the system…with one exception. As Frontier drilled to install fiber optic cable around the lake, one of our patrons had his lateral sewer line struck along with the main line nearby. Fortunately, our Superintendent, Cory Armstrong, was able to quickly sort out the situation and get repairs made. We hope no other similar problems develop, but if you notice any unusual symptoms with your sewer line, please contact the LGRSD right away.

This winter, we would ask that all property owners with grinder pumps: *PLEASE DO NOT TURN OFF POWER TO GRINDER PUMPS*. For those who winterize their homes, it is easy to overlook this. Turning off power to grinder pumps can harm the pumps. Reminder: the regular public meetings of the LGRSD Board are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the LGRSD building.

Sewer System issues: Contact LGRSD Superintendent, Cory Armstrong
Phone: 260-667-4143 Email: lkgeorgesewer@yahoo.com
Address: 1040 South Angola Road, next to the Boutique

Billing Questions: Contact Benchmark CPA
Phone: 260-665-1342 Email: LGRSD@benchmark.cpa
Address: P.O. Box 540, Angola, IN 46703

Hello from the New Breeze Editor, Leigh Ann Porsch

I hope you enjoyed this first edition of *The Breeze*. This issue is longer than usual due to its digital format, but I hope you found the information informative, engaging, and perhaps even entertaining.

We are fortunate to have many wonderful contributors who help shape each edition. If you have an article or photos you'd like to submit for consideration, I warmly encourage you to do so. Community participation is what makes *The Breeze* something truly special and enjoyable to receive. Please note that space limitations may affect what we're able to include, and longer pieces may be reserved for digital editions like this one.

Faye was able to take many photos during her time as editor, and I'd like to encourage you to submit your own via email for future issues. Articles and photos should be sent as separate attachments to **LG.Breeze@yahoo.com**. Until next time, stay warm, enjoy some good books, and start counting down to lake season.

Remembering David Geier – Nipigon Beach

David Michael Geier, age 69 passed away on August 15, 2025, after a courageous lifelong journey. He lived with extraordinary strength, humor and heart leaving behind love, creativity and joy that will continue to ripple through generations.

David was born and raised in the beloved town of Richmond, Indiana, a place that shaped his spirit and held his heart. He cherished the people, its history and stories, often weaving that sense of place into his work and life.

From a young age, David possessed the gift for seeing the world differently. As a photographer, he noticed the small details others might overlook. Moments of beauty and truth. His camera was an extension of his heart, allowing him to capture timeless images for thousands of people. One of his proudest achievements came early in his career when he photographed poet Denise Levertov during a rare interview at Earlham College. Known for avoiding cameras, she allowed David a chance that resulted in a portrait now displayed in the Smithsonian Museum. For a humble man from Richmond, this recognition was both remarkable and deeply affirming. His art continues to speak, even now through the images he left behind.

His creativity didn't end with photography. He was also a talented musician and songwriter, finding peace and expression in melodies and lyrics. Music was a sacred part of his life, a way of healing, a source of joy and language he shared with his children. He loved live music, jam sessions and the community music created. He was fully alive when the first note was struck. His love for music was not only in hearing it but feeling it and he passed this to his children.

Above all, David's greatest role and his greatest joy was being a father and a pappy. His love for God was at the center of the way he lived, and his faith guided how he raised his children, Charlie and Hannah, and later into the lives of his grandchildren. His love was not limited to his own family, he was a father figure to his children's friends over the years. With his open home, his delicious meals and unconditional love, he built with his wife Kem safety for so many who needed it. Known for his humor, quick wit and playful spirit, he carried the soul of a big kid himself. Sprinkled with just enough dark humor to keep everyone laughing.

As a pappy, his joy only deepened. His grandkids brought him light, laughter and purpose and he loved watching them grow. The same playful spirit that made him a wonderful dad made him an unforgettable grandpa.

David's love story with his wife, Kem, was the his lifeline. Together for 44 years, they built a full life of adventure, family and dedication. He spoke of her often, admiring her for her strength, her devotion as a mother and her grace as a Gigi. She was his person and the life they created was his greatest blessing.

Beyond his art, his music and his family. David was someone who taught others to live full. He embraced the beauty in the small things, found joy in laughter and encouraged those around him to live in the moment. He showed healing could be found in the music, in gathering together and especially in the stillness of nature. His favorite place in the world was on Lake George, where he found peace. Lake George is and always will be a sacred place for his family to remember him.

David lived fully, fought bravely and loved deeply. He will be carried on not only by his wife, children and grandchildren but throughout the countless lives he touched with his art, his music and his boundless love. He will be missed more than words can say, but his presence will forever be felt in laughter of his family and friends, his music that stirs our soul and the quiet beauty of Lake George.

David was preceded in death by his parents, Jerry Geier and Roselyn Geier; his brothers, Bill Geier and Pete Geier. He is survived by his wife, Kem Rodefeld-Geier; his children, Charlie (Jami) Geier and Hannah (Kaleb) Donahue.; his grandchildren, Kiptyn, Ezra, Sawyer, Ridley, Lukas and Rozelyn; his siblings, Marybeth Miller, Stephen (Karen) Geier and Kevin (Dede) Geier; sister-in-law Sue Geier (wife of his late brother Peter Geier); and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews.

The family asks that donations be made to Lake George Conservancy to honor his favorite place.
https://lakegeorgeconservancy.com/donation-lake-george/

Remembering Don Hall - Lake George Beach (South)

Don D. "Bud" Hall II, 83, of Fort Wayne died Monday, October 6, 2025 at his home on Arrowhead. Born March 30, 1942 in Fort Wayne, Bud was a son of the late Don and Dorothy (Obergfell) Hall, and a member of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Church. Bud graduated from Central Catholic High School and Xavier University. He spent most of his life working in the business started by his father, Don Hall's Restaurants, alongside many family members and friends. Bud took great pride in hard work and always strived to do the right thing in business and in life. A courageous leader, he profoundly impacted countless lives and felt a deep sense of responsibility and loyalty to those he worked with. Bud loved spending summers and making memories with family at Lake George, which will be carried on for generations to come.

Bud is survived by his Wife of 60 years, Sandra Hall; children, Kris (Jeff) Black, Libby (Ed) Alvarez, Matt (Stacie) Hall, Tim (Cara) Hall, Megan (Patrick) Burton, Kate (David) Boyer, Sara (Matt) Machall, Peter Hall, Luke (Elisabeth) Hall, and Anna (Lou) Henry; sisters Andy Devoe, and Sherry (Chet) Chapin; brothers Scott (Andy) Hall, and Jeff (Julie) Hall; brothers-in-law David (Sue) Miller, Ron Sterba, and Tom Elliott; 43 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren, many nieces and nephews. Bud was preceded in death by his son, Don "Kip" Hall III; sister, Cindy Sterba; brother, Sam Hall.

Mass of Christian Burial was held on Monday, October 13, 2025, at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne. Burial was at the Catholic Cemetery in Fort Wayne.

Memorial contributions may be made to Lake George Conservancy, Bishop Luers High School, or St. Vincent de Paul, Cathedral Conference.

Remembering Sandra K. (Kizer) Karnes - Kopekanee Beach (East)

Sandra K. Karnes, 84, of Montpelier passed away on Thursday, December 4, 2025 in the home that she grew up in. She was born on January 28, 1941 in Wauseon, Ohio to Weldon and Nina D. (Oberlander) Kizer. Sandra graduated from Montpelier High School and then received her Bachelor's Degree in Early Education from BGSU. On January 28, 1962 she married Delmar E. Karnes, and he preceded her in death.

After graduating from Bowling Green, she taught 1st grade for several years at Montpelier Schools. Then in the late 1960's she was involved in founding the Montpelier Preschool at the First Presbyterian Church, where she was on the board and taught for many years. In the mid 1980's Sandra began working as the Children's Librarian at the Montpelier Public Library, where she stayed for more than 20 years. She enjoyed spending most of her summers at the Lake George cottage her father built when she was 6 years old. Sandra enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren, reading, doing crafts and watching game shows. She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Montpelier.

She is survived by her children Kelly (Brent) Gerken of Defiance and Rob (Holly) Karnes of Dayton; grandchildren Kaitlyn (Brandon) Christman, Nicholas Gerken, and Rachel (Austin) Nainiger; sister-in-law Pat Kizer of Seattle, Washington; and nephew Geoff Kizer of Seattle. Sandra was preceded in death by her parents, husband, Delmar, and brother, Bert Kizer.

Funeral services were held on Wednesday, December 10th at the Thompson Funeral Home in Montpelier with Pastor Janice Desterhaft officiating. Interment followed at Riverside Cemetery in Montpelier.

Memorial contributions may be given to the Montpelier Public Library for children's books.

Remembering Gary Zandstra – Spring Bank (South)

Garrett Brian Zandstra, 78, of Fremont, Indiana, peacefully passed away on January 6, 2026 after a brave battle with melanoma and prostate cancer. He was surrounded by his loving family.

Gary was born on March 25, 1947 in Hammond Indiana, the son of Garrett and Dorothy (Koelikamp) Zandstra, the oldest of their 5 children.

Gary graduated from Illiana High School in 1967. He served 2 years in the Army during the Vietnam War first in the 4th Infantry Division and then in the 25th Infantry Division. He was a specialist 4th Class and earned his Combat Infantry Badge. His unit received the Presidential Unit Citation for the battle of LZ Gold/Sou Tre.

After returning from the service, he went on to Indiana University from 1968-1972 to study photo journalism and business. He worked for the Courier Tribune as a staff photographer in Bloomington.

Gary married Carol Finkbeiner on May 19, 1973 at Trinity English Lutheran Church, Ft. Wayne. Gary and Carol were married for more than 52 years. Gary was the owner of Zandstra Fruit Company from 1977 until 2000. During this time he was a council member of Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Kiwanis, and the Highland Christian School Grounds Committee. He was a man of deep faith and supported many religious outreach programs especially to the hungry and children with special needs.

In his retirement years he was heavily involved in the leadership of the Lake George Conservancy as well as working tirelessly on the acres of conservancy land. He also served as a trustee of the Lake George Sewer Board.

Gary was an avid hunter and fisherman his whole life with favorite spots like Sitka, Alaska and southern Ontario.

Surviving are his wife Carol and daughter Lee (Dori Sabella), his sisters Ruth (Charles) DeVries, Gwen Zandstra, Kass Cooper, and Judy (Boyd) Grant of England, and nephews Chuck Devries, Cole DeVries, and niece Cristine Cooper.

Visitation will be held Saturday, January 17th at 10:30 am at Trinty English Lutheran Church, Ft. Wayne. A memorial service will be held at noon. Interment will be at a later date.

Memorial donations in Gary's memory may be directed to either:
Lake George Conservancy at PO Box 564 Fremont, IN 46737 or Highland Christian School at 3040 Ridge Road, Highland IN 46322.

A Lake George Icon

Lake George lost a true icon with the passing of Gary Zandstra on Wednesday, January 6, 2026. Gary was deeply cherished by the Lake George community, known for his unwavering enthusiasm and love for the area. His commitment to Lake George was demonstrated through the many hours he devoted to volunteering with organizations such as the Lake George Conservancy, the Cottagers Association, and the Sewer District.

Community Dedication
Gary distinguished himself as one of the most dedicated individuals to the causes he supported. Whether he was working to preserve the natural beauty of Lake George or promoting community initiatives, his passion and devotion were always evident. His efforts made a lasting impact on the local environment and the people who call Lake George home.

Support for Veterans
As a Vietnam veteran, Gary was especially committed to supporting his fellow veterans. He consistently offered his help and encouragement to those who had served alongside him, embodying the spirit of camaraderie and service. In October, Gary had the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C. on an Honor Flight with fellow Lake George veterans. (see following page)

A Legacy
Gary Zandstra was truly one of a kind, and he will be greatly missed by all who had the privilege to know him. The influence he had on Lake George and the cottagers will be remembered for many years to come.

Matt Minnick, President, Lake George Cottagers Association

Lake George Fun Facts: Watercraft Survey Results

In late summer 2025, several board members and their spouses embarked on a cruise around Lake George with a specific goal in mind: to conduct a comprehensive watercraft survey. The primary purpose of this effort was to support the Lake Council's ongoing initiatives aimed at enhancing law enforcement on the larger lakes in the area. While not everyone may have pondered the exact number of speed boats or other watercraft on Lake George, the results of this survey provide useful information for anyone who might be curious.

Docks and Watercraft Comparison

Item	Indiana	Michigan	Lake George
Docks	246	194	440
Watercraft			
Ski	99	72	171
Wake	14	8	22
Pontoon	154	111	265
Jet Ski	67	53	120
Other Powered	39	14	53
Sail	11	15	26
Other non-powered	5	5	10
Total	389	278	667

Lake George Veterans Honored on Flight #53 to Washington, D.C.

Three Vietnam Era veterans from Lake George — pictured left to right Gary Zandstra, Bruce McAfee, and Don Dormeier — participated in the 53rd Honor Flight Northeast Indiana (HFNEI) on October 8, 2025. The group joined 85 Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Marine veterans, each accompanied by a volunteer "Guardian," for an all-expense-paid day in Washington, D.C., visiting memorials that honor the service and sacrifices of America's veterans.

Throughout the day, the group visited Arlington National Cemetery, the Navy Memorial, World War II Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Korean War Veterans Memorial, Air Force Memorial, and the FDR Memorial. HFNEI makes the most of every moment — the day begins at 4 a.m. and concludes around 11 p.m. with an emotional "Welcome Home" celebration at Fort Wayne International Airport.

This particular Honor Flight focused on Vietnam veterans, many of whom received less-than-favorable receptions upon returning home decades ago. For many of us, this trip was both healing and uplifting — a long-overdue "thank you" for our service.

Among the day's highlights were witnessing the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, standing at the Lincoln Memorial overlooking the Reflecting Pool, and visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, where 58,318 names are etched in remembrance. Many of us were deeply moved as we located the names of friends and relatives on The Wall and made rubbings to bring home.

It's been more than 50 years since the Vietnam War ended, and public attitudes toward veterans have changed dramatically. We saw that firsthand when we arrived at Reagan National Airport, where travelers waiting for their flights spontaneously stood, clapped, and thanked us for our service. Later that night, as our flight returned to Fort Wayne, we were greeted by more than 300 cheering family members, friends, and local supporters. A band played, flags waved, and we walked through a tunnel of applause — a moment that few of us will ever forget.

Our Guardians for the trip were Gary's daughter, Lee, and Bruce's daughter, Diane. Without our knowing, they had reached out to family, friends, and fellow servicemembers, collecting personal letters for a "Mail Call" on the flight home. Reading those heartfelt messages stirred memories and emotions long tucked away, adding even more meaning to an unforgettable day. We are deeply grateful to our Guardians for making our experience so special.

In closing, I want to extend my sincere thanks to Honor Flight Northeast Indiana (HFNEI) for the opportunity to join 85 fellow veterans on Flight #53 to Washington, D.C. — truly the experience of a lifetime. To any Lake George veterans who haven't yet taken part in an Honor Flight, I can't recommend it enough. Visit hfnei.org and click "Apply Now." It's an experience you will treasure forever.