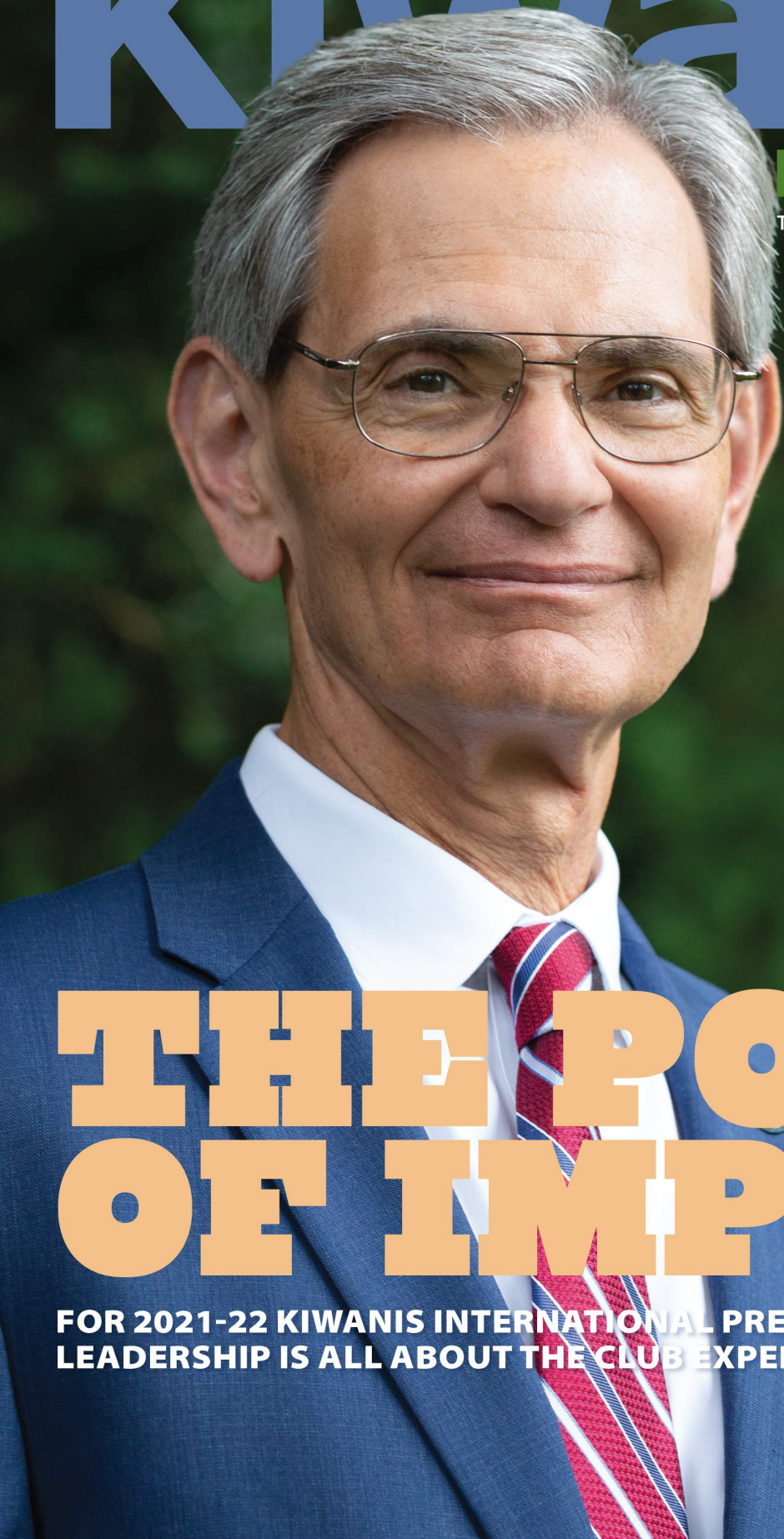


Kiwanis

MAGAZINE

TELLING THE KIWANIS STORY OCT/NOV 2021



THE SEA CHANGE
INSTILL A LOVE
OF NATURE IN KIDS



READY TO LEARN
GETTING KIDS THEIR
NEEDED NUTRIENTS

THE BIG PAYBACK
NFL EXECUTIVE
PAYS IT FORWARD

THE POINT OF IMPACT

FOR 2021-22 KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT PETER MANCUSO,
LEADERSHIP IS ALL ABOUT THE CLUB EXPERIENCE.



THE SEA CHANGE

OUR KIDS' HARDEST-EARNED INHERITANCE IS JOY IN NATURE. PASS IT ALONG. Story and photos by Kate Inglis

Leonard Sponagle drowned in the Bay of Fundy on August 21, 1843. His young son James, the sole survivor, spent four days lashed to the ship's rigging before he was found.

It's one story of many in my family line. A boy spent four days alone, tied to a mast and starving, having seen his father — my

great-great-great-great grandfather — and his crew swept overboard. What went through his head? God, I imagine. His family. Agony. There was no radar, radio beacons or Coast Guard. His tiny body was a needle in the haystack of the merciless North Atlantic Ocean. That he was rescued and went on to become a master mariner in his own right is a miracle.



Photo: Swell Time Board Co., Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia

One hundred and seventy-eight Augusts later, a surfing coach emailed a photo from the GoPro strapped to the end of my son's board. The moment he first stood up on a wave, I thought I'd see an expression of shock or exertion or fear, eyes squinting against the salt spray. But he was serene.

We are Leonard's descendants. I am cheering on Cherry Hill Beach, in sands he would have known blindfolded. *Up! Up! Go, Ben!*

Captain James Sponagle (the son of Leonard's James) commanded the barque *Tecumseh* and was drowned when that ship was lost in the English Channel in 1868. He was 23 years old. In November 1878, 18-year-old Edward

Sponagle was thrown from a topmast and was never seen again. Others lost at sea on the genealogical chart: William Sponagle in June 1840. Frederick Collins in 1911. Earle Whitford Croft in 1922. Brothers Whitford and Walter Sponagle in 1889. Harold Whitford Sponagle in 1942. On his 20th birthday in 1845, George Sponagle drowned just off LaHave, within sight of home.

How could the Sponagle women look at the horizon from their seaside homes and see anything but the boys and men they loved still out there, drifting? The ocean was inevitable but perilous. That is what they would see: the irreconcilable, sobering echo of all wild places.





"TO US, WILD PLACES ARE A PLAYGROUND. MANY OF US BUILD OUR LIVES AROUND ENSURING OUR SPOT IN A WILD PLACE, YEARNING TO RAISE CHILDREN WITH ROSY CHEEKS AND TOUGH SUMMER FEET, OR TO BRING KIDS THERE WHO WOULD OTHERWISE MISS OUT."



Today, my sons sail boats unchanged in their essentials since the days of the mariners who made me. Mainsail, jib, backstay, boom, helm and keel. But something else has changed.

It's a sea change, you could say, for all of us. In 2021, we see our mountains, forests and oceans with delighted appreciation. To us, wild places are a playground. Many of us build our lives around ensuring our spot in a wild place, yearning to raise children with rosy cheeks and tough summer feet, or to bring kids there who would otherwise miss out. In the wild we breathe deep and feel more alive.

With the weather reports,

telephones and ambulances of modern life, we felt safe enough to deem recreation essential. But since then, we've plugged in. We've grown lethargic, Roombas cleaning the floor as we Netflix. As cities engulfed small towns and villages, wild places shrank for some, becoming an abstraction. The lull between *nature is perilous* and *nature is relaxing* made us weaker than our forebearers. We have heart surgeons, sure, but do we have the fortitude of our ancestors? Are we passing it on to our kids?

The good fortune and relative ease of modern life — for everyone, not only the rich — has con-





spired to make us Inside People. But the human body, heart and spirit need an Outside Life.

No matter where or how we live, nature is reserved for no one. Children see it even when we don't. They stop to show us a dandelion between the cracks. The moment their feet hit the grass of city parks or the clatter of a boardwalk, they run. To a child, a riverbank is a wonderland greater than any manmade thing. As of course it is. Nature is where we came from.

Not long ago, we were afraid. We were right to be. We were humbled over and over again by loss and white-knuckled survival. Today, it's not so much that we need to help our kids understand nature. It's that we need to follow them. Drive the car, take the bus. Just get them there. Then see what they see; do what they do.

We — the collective “we” — earned our inheritance of joy in nature one Leonard and James Sponagle at a time. Pass it on. Make that inheritance central to the lives of the children in your care. Join in on the hunt for hermit crabs. Bring a bucket. ☐

Kate Inglis is an award-winning author who writes books about pirates and giants as well as grief, magic and all the stars. And frogs in a teeny-tiny folk band.



Whether for kids or adults, her novels and poetry are infused with the salt, woodsmoke and fresh air of the North Atlantic coast.