

Dort named Volunteer of the Year by sanctuary

By **JORDAN SPENCE**

News Staff Writer

ALPENA — Bryan Dort said he was honored and shocked to be named the 2016 Betty Krueger Volunteer of the Year for the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

The award is presented every year during the sanctuary volunteer celebration.

Dort focuses much of his volunteer time during the ROV competition in Alpena. An ROV is an underwater robot that allows the operator to be above water. He started out as a mentor for

his daughter's ROV team at Immanuel Lutheran School.

"She moved off to college and I wanted to get involved with the ROV competition," he said. "A passion of mine is getting kids involved in (science, technology, engineering and math). I love getting them to solve problems and seeing that light bulb go off in their head."

He said even if the child doesn't go into a STEM career, the teamwork and solving problem skills will always follow them.

He continues to volunteer with the competition as a

judge, but he also is a safety kayaker for the Cardboard Regatta race during the Maritime Festival and provides technical assistance during the Thunder Bay International Film Festival.

Sanctuary Media Coordinator Stephanie Gandulla said Dort is one of 300 volunteers. He has put in 150 hours during his 10 years as a volunteer.

"He is absolutely sincere in his dedication to the sanctuary, and in the sanctuary's mission to protect the Great Lakes and their rich history," Gandulla said in a statement. "He also un-

derstands the system as a whole, and communicates the value of America's special underwater places in not only his actions, but also his words.

"Living in the Great Lakes region for much of his life, Bryan has a keen sense of community, and how the presence of a marine sanctuary can add to quality of life and economic development. Through fostering this sanctuary ethic (his wife and two daughters are also sanctuary volunteers), Bryan is a true champion of the system."

Dort moved to Alpena in

1995 with his wife, Lesslee, and they have two daughters. He works as a software engineer for Infor Inc. and hopes to continue his volunteer work with the sanctuary.

"There's so many great volunteers here so I was just really surprised," Dort said.

To learn more about how to get involved visit www.thunderbay.noaa.gov/education/involved/welcome.com

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