

DREAMIN'S FREE ESSAY *by* MEGAN BAIRD

One may have many dreams in life, whether it be that of yourself as a child eating a cotton candy cloud in the middle of a blue sky or those more of an important and life-changing nature. Dreams that can change the world if one only has the drive and perseverance to make their dreams reality. One such dream of my own would be to be able to preserve what makes our Great Lakes so great.

Living next to a lake my entire childhood has certainly had its affects; from swimming and fishing in the fish-filled waters to a bad experience with a crawfish ending up in a water shoe, it has certainly created many memories, and many hobbies. Not only do I love to swim, I'm also an avid kayaker and like to put a line in the water when I can. Our local lake was man-made however, and rather small, so when I was brought to Lake Michigan for the first time my childhood was filled with wonder. How could there be a lake so vast that one could not see the neighboring coast? Immediately, I wanted to explore, jumping into the waves on a wakeboard and being promptly tumbled back to shore in a wave too large for my small body.

We visited the Lakes a few more times since then, and each time I enjoy diving underneath the waves, searching for fossils and other oddities. I never thought much about pursuing a career of protecting them until it came to my high school years, seeing the threats of invasive species and toxic dumping by large companies. Reading those threats had made me angry, thinking of all those times of when I myself had dove in those waters, enjoying the fun those bodies of water created. If these threats didn't seize, who was to say that I could enjoy the lakes in the future? That my future children could? What about the species living there? It sparked a fire in me that wouldn't end, that wouldn't flicker out into embers of past thoughts. Instead, it stuck, that dream of wanting to preserve what I enjoyed in my childhood.

Pursuing this dream could affect many lives, not only those enjoying the lakes as a recreation, but also the many species that reside inside of it. A multitude of species live in the lakes or live off what they provide, such as fish and birds, crayfish and insects, and even humans who use the waters as a source to create electricity. The Great Lakes are simply that, great. They have so many roles that many of us do not even see, and I'd like to continue that greatness for future generations, whether they be our own or the life that resides inside of them.