

## Lili Colby

- **How do your knowledge, skills, and abilities match with critical skills sets ACA's Board has identified?**

I have served on the ACA board since 2017 and am currently the Vice Chair. As co-owner of MTI Life Jackets with my husband, Gordon, my experience is deeply rooted in the commercial paddlesports industry. I oversee MTI's branding, sales, and marketing. Gordon and I met while working for Mad River Canoe in Vermont in the early 1990s, so we have seen paddlesports grow and evolve. In 2001 we were hired by the Takashina family to run MTI, and we purchased the company in 2011. MTI was awarded the ACA J. Henry Rushton Award in 2014. Early on I recognized that the ACA is uniquely poised to advance paddlesports participation and promote safe paddling practices. In 2012 we launched the "Make the Most of Your Life Jacket" cooperative marketing campaign. All MTI life jackets come with a postcard as part of the hangtag bundle offering a free one-year membership with purchase, the goal being to build awareness of the organization and encourage future paid membership participation. More recently MTI sponsored a keynote presentation at the 2019 Canoecopia Show, "The Future of US Olympic & Paralympic Paddlesport: 2020 Tokyo and Beyond" to help highlight the ACA's new role as the National Governing Body (NGB) for the Olympic sports of slalom, sprint, and paracanoe. In both these examples, my goal has been to help the ACA leverage retailers, retail and tradeshow events, and direct-to-consumer merchandising to get the ACA message out to people who might be interested in becoming more invested in the sport of paddling and the wider community of paddlesports.

- **Which of ACA's major tenets (instruction, recreation, competition and stewardship) do you feel is most important? Why?**

We need to make ACA benefits clear and tangible to give people a reason to join. Each of the 4 tenets can bring in new members and maintain existing committed members, so all are important. I would prioritize instruction and competition in the year ahead as the "low hanging fruit." Instructors are the authentic voice and passion of the ACA. Their work can create new paddle leaders. But we need to help them stay relevant in a world when "becoming an expert" might be less important. Rental operations and day-trip touring businesses are a growing segment in paddlesports – and many could use help increasing their skill and safety protocols. How can instructors dovetail into these new markets? We also need to give them new technology tools, such as apps to be able to sign up new members instantly online at events.

As regards competition, we should work to bridge the disconnect between the recreational paddler and our athletes - like rising star Nevin Harrison - that we will see on TV in the Tokyo Olympics next summer. The ACA has an incredible opportunity to create programs that could identify and nurture a future medalist at the 2028 Olympics in LA. We need to sow the seeds of those Olympic dreams now. The ACA can be that fertile ground if we set our sights on tying together a passion for paddling, instruction, and competition.

- **How will you serve all of ACA's diverse membership?**

Before I can know how to serve, I need to listen so that I can better understand what is important and where the opportunities are for the future. Paddlesport events and business meetings are my sandbox for getting a chance to listen to many different stakeholders - members, instructors, and non-members. To non-members I enjoy posing the question: what would be meaningful to you to become a member of the ACA? To members: what leads you to rejoin each year? Or sadly: what led you to let your ACA membership lapse? What would it take to bring you back?

Relevancy. Diversity and inclusion. Fundamentals to a healthy business and a healthy non-profit community.

- **Do you have any conflicts of interest that would impact your ability to serve on ACA's Board? Conflicts include any area where a Board members action or service on the Board might reasonably be expected to create benefit for themselves or a family member that they would not otherwise gain.**

As the owner of MTI Life Jackets, I would recuse myself from any issues that might have something to do with the purchasing of life jackets. Furthermore, I do not expect to be given any advantage over other companies when it comes to bidding for supplying vests for an ACA program. Lastly, MTI will continue to support the cost of the membership hangtag program regardless of how the vote swings! My interest is to have a great group of people on the board that are willing to work hard and care 100% about making a difference to the success of the organization.