



A2 – Tom Leaird

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Objectives:

If elected a member of the board of directors, I would like to see the DEMA organization more actively involved in promoting dive training. New students are the life blood of the industry. Also, I believe that research into past student's diving habits would yield information to answer the question: How do we encourage divers to take advanced training, purchase equipment, and travel to dive destinations, thus making scuba a committed activity?

Attendance at the annual DEMA convention has been down along with the economy as diving business in general has struggled. As economic conditions improve DEMA must be positioned to assist our industry returning to profitable operations. The DEMA organization has been more than an annual trade show, but the presence in the industry should be expanded.

Many individuals come to the annual trade show and do not take advantage of the wealth of information presented in various seminars. Marketing these presentations should encourage greater attendance.

Communication with both members and the industry in general must be increased to head off concerns before they are realized. DEMA is uniquely positioned to lead the industry in the future.

About Tom Leaird:

At age 70 he has been an active diver since 1961 and instructor since 1969. He has owned Leaird's Underwater Service in Muncie, Indiana, since 1971. The dive business started as a part-time store but quickly expanded and today provides programs throughout the state of Indiana and Western Ohio including nine YMCAs and two universities with 12 instructors. Over the years the group of instructors has trained over 4,000 divers. Trained as a professional photographer, Tom spent 31 years with the Muncie lab of Lifetouch Prestige Portraits retiring as Vice President of Production with 250 employees.

Tom has held instructor training programs throughout the USA plus two times in Europe certifying more than 250 new instructors. During those years he and his wife Bobbi served as tour guides escorting hundreds of divers to many locations throughout the Caribbean.

From 1974 through 1986 Tom served as Region Commissioner for six states in Mid-America for the YMCA Scuba Program. From 1986 on, he served on the YScuba Advisory Committee, serving four years as Chairman. During those years he served as volunteer author, co-author, and editor for ten training manuals and books for YScuba. Tom was presented the Bernard E. Empleton award for outstanding service to YMCA Scuba. He also represented YScuba on the RSTC including a term as president.

During 2008 when YMCA of the USA ended support for the scuba program, Tom started a new training agency as a replacement. Scuba Educators International began in October 2008 with Tom as CEO and currently has instructors in 31 states and nine countries outside the USA. The agency is based on full education of scuba students providing support for the traditional open water diver course of 32 hours in classroom and pool plus five open water training dives.

Tom is active in his local community serving as chairman of the Muncie Family YMCA board of directors with seven branches. He has held the title of general chairman of the local Kiwanis Club Christmas tree sales project for 15 years which has returned over \$250,000 in profits back to his community in projects for youth.

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Tom and his wife Bobbi live in Muncie, Indiana where their daughter Tami serves as store manager of Leaird's Underwater Service. Their son Dan and family live in West Lafayette, Indiana, where Dan has earned his PhD and manages a research lab for Purdue University.

A DEMA member and active supporter for many years, Tom brings a wealth of knowledge on many aspects of the scuba industry.