



The Christodora Experience

By Melissa Abramson, Program Coordinator

“Good morning. My name is Steph and if I were an animal, I would be a monkey – oo oo oo ah ah ah”

“And my name is Josh and I would be a sheep - baah baah”

A little stunned, Kayla looks around the 6th grade classroom and notices some of her classmates start to laugh while others stare wide-eyed at the new teachers who just made the monkey and sheep noises at the front of the classroom.

“All right, now we want to know who you are as well, so let’s go around the classroom and tell us your names and make your favorite animal noise,” states one of the new teachers.

It’s the Christodora Winter Ecology Program’s (CWEP) first day in her school and already Kayla is petrified that she’s going to have to speak, or even worse, make an animal noise in front of her classmates. A brave few step up to the plate and growl like a tiger or bark like a dog, while others, including Kayla, sit bashfully quiet, barely letting the sound of their names escape their lips.

Over the next few weeks, Steph and Josh bring new games and activities to the classroom. The games are fun and different and Kayla begins to realize that she actually looks forward to the new teachers coming in. She likes moving around her classroom and answering questions about ecosystems or animal adaptations and notices that her classmates are way more interesting than she originally thought. The teachers are always asking questions and she notices that she is learning a lot from her classmates’ answers and also that she knows a lot more than she had realized. Her favorite activity so far is the water cycle game where she becomes a water droplet. She pretends to shiver and shake as the temperature rises and she evaporates. Then, grouped together with other water droplet classmates, as the temperature cools off for condensation, she falls to the ground as precipitation.

In week seven, at the last class, Steph explains to all the students that they are now a part of the Christodora family and that even though they will be ending their classroom visits, there are other ways to stay involved. “And, we’ll be seeing you in two months when your class comes up to the Manice Education Center!” Josh informs the class excitedly. The remainder of the class time is spent talking about Manice and



making bumper stickers with important environmental messages on them.

Two months later, with packed lunches and sleeping bags in tow, the students hug their parents goodbye and depart on a school bus for Manice in the Berkshire Mountains. Kayla, never having been out of New York City, nervously talks with her friends about being in the woods and camping. Five hours later, the bus turns onto a dirt road and climbs, climbs, climbs up to the top of a very steep hill...and there it is! Kayla sees Steph and Josh with four other educators waving hello to the bus.

The next three days are filled with hiking, group building activities, name games, beaver lessons, forest ecology, campfires, and night hikes. Kayla is very proud of herself for walking through the woods in the dark by herself and is greeted by huge hugs and high fives from her other classmates when she made it to the end of her solo hike. She is surprised that she is making friends with students from other classes, and even more surprised that she isn’t homesick.

“Come back for the summer. Or if you want to do more right now, join our weekend program at the Bronx Botanical Gardens,” Matt, the Director of Manice, says on their last day at the center. “We want you to stay involved and to keep growing with us.”

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EEAC NEWS.....

Steering Committee Meetings

EEAC Steering Committee members meet on the third Wednesday of every month (except August). Upcoming EEAC Steering Committee meetings are December 16, January 20, 2010 and February 17.

Steering Committee meetings are usually held at New York University, Pless Building, 32 Washington Square Park East and Washington Place in the 5th floor Conference Room. Steering Committee meetings are open to anyone interested in learning about environmental education in New York City and sharing information about special programs and projects.

Meetings are also occasionally held at New York City sites associated with our members. Please be sure to contact an EEAC Steering Committee member or visit the EEAC website at www.eeac-nyc.org to confirm meeting location and schedule.

Newsletter Deadlines

If you would like to submit an article for the newsletter, please email it as a Microsoft Word attachment to lmiller296@aol.com. The newsletter deadlines are the first Monday in April, July, October and January. We would love your ideas!

Newsletter Committee & Contributors

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Kim Estes-Fradis
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Joy Garland
Jane Jackson
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The Environmental Education Advisory Council (EEAC) would like to acknowledge the support of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for helping to produce the EEAC newsletter. Visit the DEP website at www.nyc.gov/dep, email educationoffice@dep.nyc.gov or call (718) 595-3506 for information about DEP's education resources for students and teachers.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

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This newsletter is a publication of the Environmental Education Advisory Council (EEAC), a voluntary organization of educators, classroom teachers, administrators and other professionals in active support of quality environmental education.

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GET CONNECTED!

If you are a member of EEAC and want to be part of information sharing and on-line discussion on the EEAC listserv, contact:

cfranken@nyc.rr.com

Coming up on the Horizon: NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN BUFFALO, NY IN 2010!

While I'm the EEAC Secretary and NYSDEC's Regional Environmental Educator for NYC, I am also involved in the national environmental education arena with the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE, online at www.naaee.org). I'm excited to announce that Buffalo, NY and the New York State Outdoor Education Association (NYSOEA) will be hosting the 2010 International NAAEE Conference! So save the date and come support EE in New York at this fantastic (and informative!) conference. The conference will be September 29 – October 2, 2010.

What can EEAC members do at this international EE conference? A LOT! I am one of the co-chairs organizing this international conference and I know how much work needs to be done—we need volunteers. You can volunteer to be room monitors, lead field trips, and help out at the registration table, but more importantly—offer a workshop! Promote what YOU do in environmental education. And, of course, attend the conference.

The 2010 conference theme is “Environmental Education: Building Connections, Bridging Gaps” and there are 12 themes for presentations. The call for workshop presentations is open through February 1, 2010. Visit <http://www.naaee.org/conference/call-for-presentations/> to learn more and submit a proposal.

Also, active NYSOEA members (members before January 1, 2010) will have an opportunity to apply for a rebate for a significant part of the registration fee.

I've personally attended three NAAEE conferences and learned an incredible amount at each conference—including how important food is to a conference and why research and knowledge about environmental education on a national and international level is so important to bring home and use at a local level.

I hope to see all of you in Buffalo, NY, for the joint NAAEE—NYSOEA International Conference September 29 – October 2, 2010. Feel free to email me at baukerit@gw.dec.state.ny.us and I'll happily answer questions about the conference and accept an offer to help!

Betsy Ukeritis
EEAC Secretary

Reports from the Field

Staten Island: SISTA, the Staten Island Science Teachers' Association, is being revived. Under the sponsorship of the Staten Island Museum and the Greenbelt, the organization will be getting a new name that will reflect the inclusion of ALL the science and nature teachers from both formal and informal sectors. Stay tuned.

Green Horizons: The 2009 version was held at Snug Harbor and was a huge success. Over 200 middle schoolers and their chaperones attended, participating in hands-on workshops, highlighting “green” careers. Working experts shared their skills with the youngsters. Even the rain couldn't dampen their spirits.

Youth Panel: Middle and high school students recently convened at the Richmondtown courthouse to hear an excerpt from a new young adult book, *Stargzr* by its author, Susan Amesse. Four prominent environmental educators were on hand to discuss and enhance the story which deals with what a young person can do to sustain the environment.

This is a sample of a new feature of the EEAC newsletter---share what's happening at YOUR part of the EE world. Keep it short and informative. Send to: lmiller296@aol.com

Book Buzz

Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded- August 27, 1883

by Simon Winchester

illustrations by Soun Vannithone

Harper Collins 2003

I spent several intriguing hours reading this exciting book about the major volcanic eruption off the coast of Indonesia in the late 19th century. Not only did the island of Krakatoa disappear completely, but shock waves and repercussions from the eruption were heard and felt around the world. Because the technology of telegraph and undersea cable communication was already in place, details could be flashed around the world quickly. That marked the beginning of globalization, as the whole world was informed and affected.

The eruption and its circumstances were studied in great detail that later helped to solidify the acceptance of the theory of plate tectonics and continental drift.

But the upheavals were not merely geologic. The eruption and subsequent tidal waves came at the height of European colonialism in the Far East. The social and political upheavals that followed within a few short years, leading to the subsequent rebellion by the indigenous population, it could be argued, were an indirect result of this cataclysm.

In Winchester's words, "...did the eruption somehow act as political catalyst?" "Did Islam come to act as a banner under which these people [indigenous population] might turn against the Dutchmen...whom they could now see as their oppressors?"

As we ponder these questions, they resonate even today. This book shows how a natural event, albeit of major proportions, can have large and long-lasting effects that resound even through centuries of time and thousands of miles, changing the course of history.

The book does contain a great deal of geologic information (Winchester was trained as a geologist), but he is a natural storyteller and the human interest is gripping. I recommend this for your library and reading.

Lenore Miller (our regular book reviewer, Regina McCarthy is taking a breather)

EE Resources

Compiled by Betsy Ukeritis

Toyota Tapestry Grants

Deadline: January 18, 2010

www.nsta.org/pd/tapestry

The Toyota Tapestry Grants program offers grants to K-12 science teachers for innovative projects that will enhance science education during the 2010-11 school year. The program will award 50 large grants and a minimum of 20 mini-grants, totaling \$550,000 in all, for projects in the categories of Physical Science Application, Environmental Science Education, and Integrating Literacy and Science.

Fields of Green: Restoring Culture, Environment, and Education (Book)

By Marcia McKenzie, Paul Hart,

Heesoon Bai, and Bob Jickling (Eds.)

Published by Hampton Press, 2009

(available at www.amazon.com)

This book is about hopeful daydreams and their implications for action in the interwoven spheres of culture, environment, and education. In spite and because of the recent significant shift in concern for the environment around the globe, the editors believe there remains the urgent task of restoring the

ways we live on this earth. Cultural understandings that value the individual over the collective, humans over other species, concept over experience, and progress as globalizing growth and change, are examples of the sorts of imaginaries that can be traced in the ecological and cultural losses we are currently experiencing and participating in around the world.

Michelle Fine at The Graduate Center at the City University of New York says, "Fields of Green provokes a radical imaginary for education and activism; a 'nature guide' that helps us to see how progress masks loss; a textual masseur that asks us to consider, sensually, the stakes for today and our responsibilities to tomorrow."

Get Your Class Outside with The Gravestone Project!

<http://www.goearthtrek.org/Gravestones/Gravestones.html>

The Geological Society of America (GSA) is inviting the public to measure gravestones to contribute data on air pollution and climate change since the Industrial Revolution. Because white marble gravestones are highly susceptible to erosion, and bear dates, the stones can help scientists infer a region's climate and pollution history. Visit the website to learn how to participate and log your data.

Interview with Yian-Kim (Debbie) Zhang

By Michelle Fufaro



This past summer, Debbie interned as a Crew Leader at Wave Hill's Forestry Project program for high school students. She is currently in her final year at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, with a major in Landscape Architecture. Debbie is a native New Yorker who is very eager to begin her career.

Michelle: Describe yourself.

Debbie: I grew up in the Bronx. I went to high school at John F. Kennedy and started out with the Environmental Club just to get involved. It then became something more than just a club; it became a great interest of mine to help create a greener neighborhood and have fun at the same time.

M: Why did you choose to study landscape architecture?

D: When deciding what to major in at college, I knew I wanted to continue on the environmental path that I had become involved in through the Environmental Club and Wave Hill Forest Project. I was also interested in art and design so I decided to combine the two interests into one package: landscape architecture. At the time, I didn't totally understand what this major entails. I believed at that point that I wanted to head into urban design, but now, looking back, majoring in landscape architecture has broadened my view that change is possible and that a person has the power to foster change in the environment with the community.

M: Why do you want to pursue a career in the environmental field?

D: I would like to educate youth about important matters and how they can help to make their neighborhoods better places. I'd like to teach people about rehabilitating vacant lots, creating urban farms and other similar ideas. The environment is what sustains us now and for future generations. It is very important to have this knowledge and know what can be done to help in any way before it's too late.

M: Describe your internship at Wave Hill.

D: I am a crew leader for high school students. There are a few facets to my internship at Wave Hill. As part of the training, I visited and designed plans for the projects to take place this summer. My plan entailed removing weeds to create a more defined trail, strengthening the entrance area through trail bars and creating an addition to the seating area near the Hudson River. I supervised students in the field and we worked as a team doing trail maintenance. We placed new trail bars in order to help guide park users, added water bars to help reduce soil erosion and laid down wood-chipping on the trail to help reduce soil compaction. Through all of this work, I helped students identify plants and trees on Wave Hill grounds and in Riverdale Park. I also serve as a homegroup leader. A homegroup is when a group of about six or seven students and a crew leader gather together to relax and get to know one another better through team building activities.

M: How has your experience at Wave Hill helped to support your career goals?

D: My experience at Wave Hill helped to support my interests in youth environmental education. It inspired me to want to create a program where I would involve students and community members to create a design for urban agriculture gardens in vacant lots and teach them about the creation and maintenance of the gardens. The students would learn about agriculture and business by selling what they grow. They would also learn about environmental issues related to agriculture and new ways of growing food in an urban setting.

M: What advice do you have for high school students wishing to choose an environmental career?

D: I would say, "go for it!". The environmental field, is a growing field, involving areas from research, to design to field work. There is much to be done because people are beginning to realize that what we do impacts the world in which we live, for ourselves and future generations. There is much to be done and learning about what you can do is the first step.



DECOMPOSITION TIMELINE

Adapted from the NYC Teachers' RRRResource Kit,
DSNY Bureau of Waste Prevention, Reuse and Recycling,
(developed in consultation with EEAC)
www.nyc.gov/wasteless/schools

Objective:

To illustrate the length of time it takes various items to decompose, or break down.

Materials:

- Loose-leaf paper
- Banana peel
- Cotton t-shirt
- Wool sock
- Paper plate
- Plastic garbage bag
- Painted wood
- Plastic film container
- Nylon fabric
- Rubber boot sole
- Tin can
- Plastic cup
- Aluminum can
- Plastic six-pack holder (cut rings)
- Glass bottle
- Plastic bottles

Note: An alternative to using the actual items above would be to use pictures of the items.

Procedure:

1. Have each of the students represent a piece of waste. Ask them to arrange themselves in a line according to the speed of decomposition (going from fastest to slowest decomposition rate).
2. After they have arranged themselves in an order, discuss each item one by one. Ask why they made the decisions they did for each item, and ask whether the other students agree. Using your answer key, rearrange each student in the correct order (if they were out of order), until the line reflects the correct decomposition rate for all items.

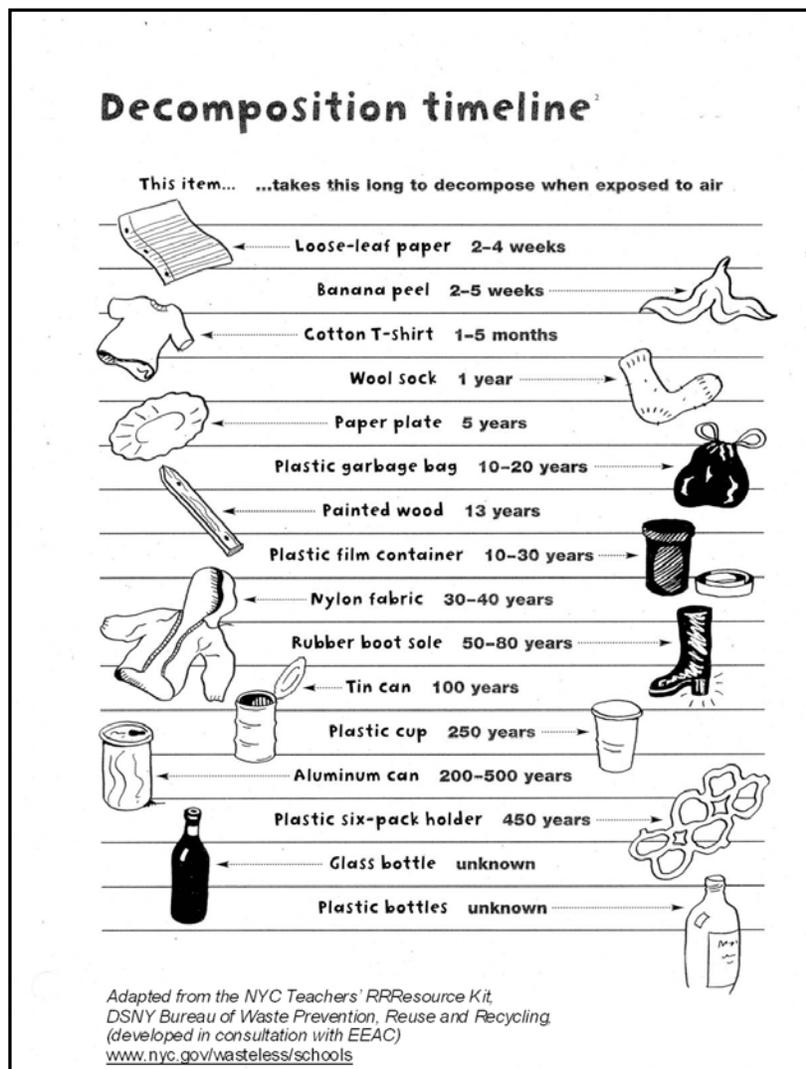


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Kayla is thrilled, buzzing with the new knowledge she has gained and good friends she'll be taking back to the city. She is sure she'd come back for the summer trip. Canoeing and backpacking sound pretty challenging but, as she learned at Manice, taking risks is a sure way to grow. When she steps off the bus and into her parents' arms, she cannot stop talking about the trip, about the trees and rivers and the macroinvertebrates she identified. She feels brave and proud for making it back and excited to continue exploring nature and the outdoors with Christodora.

The Christodora Winter Ecology Program is offered free of charge to underserved public middle schools in New York City one day a week for seven weeks. The curriculum used closely follows the scope and sequence for New York State Department of Education standards for science classes. This program is followed by school field trips up to the Manice Education Center in the Berkshire Mountains in Massachusetts and builds on the ideas and concepts shared in CWEP. The summer programs offer one-week to 19-day trips filled with canoeing, backpacking, and environmental studies for students in 6th through 12th grades. There is also

another program, the Summer Ecology Program that is more science intensive for those 16 and over. During the school year, Christodora also offers hands-on learning programs on weekends, as well as New Youth Conservationists, which is held every Saturday and Sunday at the Bronx Botanical Gardens. For more information please see our website, www.christodora.org or contact: info@christodora.org. We want to get your students outside exploring nature with us!





MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION 2010

New Member Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

Apt. _____ Zip Code _____-____-

If Sustaining Organization, Name of Contact Person

Business Phone () _____

Home Phone () _____

Affiliation (for categories other than Sustaining Organization): _____

Title/Position: _____

Address (for categories other than Sustaining Organization):

E-mail address: _____

Mail completed form and check to:

Jay Holmes, Treasurer, EEAC, American Museum of Natural History, 79th Street and Central Park West, New York, N.Y. 10024

Date: _____

Please check the appropriate calendar year membership category:

- \$ 20 Regular \$ 50 Sustaining Organization
- \$200 Individual Life Membership

Please make checks payable to EEAC.

Thank you!

EEAC is a 501-(c)3 organization.

I would like to become involved in a committee.

Please provide me with information about the following committees:

- Communications Programs Membership
- TEEP (Teacher Environmental Education Preparation)



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