



EEAC

WINTER/SPRING 2003

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

HERE WE GO, AGAIN....*

Sadly, for at least the fourth time in its twenty-seven year existence, the Gateway Environmental Study Center (GESC) is being threatened with closure. It is an action that makes no sense when one considers the teachers and students who will be affected by it.

Twenty-seven years ago the Gateway Environmental Study Center opened its doors. It was the brainchild of visionary people at both the Board of Education (now DOE) and the then newly-formed Gateway National Recreation Area. Sam Holmes, Bernie Kirshenbaum and Gene Erzersky were its creators. Over this last quarter of a century those doors have opened to teachers, students and parents who have participated in professional development across all curricula in addition to environmental and outdoor education activities.

Overwhelmingly, those who have participated in these programs came away with a feeling that this was a place that served our school system well. Where else in the city did we have a school camping program with established campsites that trained teachers in outdoor education skills—while integrating them in required curricula? Where else in the country, for that matter, is there a program like **Operation Explore (OPEX)**, which involves the cooperation of City, State and Federal agencies and has brought environmental education to nearly 30,000 students through its year-long programs?

Historically, when an organization came to the Department of Education with an environmental education idea, where was it directed? Gateway Environmental Education Center. In my tenure as Coordinator those programs included the newly formed Roger Tory Peterson Institute; the new Audubon Center in Prospect Park, and the NIKE Sustainability workshops all came to GESC's doorstep looking for direction.

The Center has the institutional memory of not only its Coordinators, but also all who have been part of its history. Gateway teachers are now principals and hold various administrative positions throughout the city. When I walked through DOE offices there were very few people I met who didn't say in relation to Gateway, "I camped there" or "I was an OPEX teacher!" GESC is the only Department of Education environmental program to serve the entire city. It is a tradition that has remained because people looked to the Center to keep the vision of those early designers alive.

For at least the last 15 years, GESC has survived (sadly) on little more than a shoestring budget. Imagine serving 2,000 teachers a year and at least 50,000 students on sheer dedication and resourcefulness! The Department of Education could hold GESC up as a model of effective education on a limited budget.

My nine years as Coordinator of the Gateway Environmental Study Center were a struggle to get necessary resources. I hope the new Coordinator will see better times and less hardship ahead. I say this as one who loved her job and teaching, and was blessed with a career full of people and events that made it easy to love. Much of this came to me through the Gateway Environmental Study Center. It gave me direction and it gave me hope for the possibilities of a profession that I still honor. Let's hope that the new DOE administration and the Mayor provide GESC with the resources it needs so much and uses so well.

Regina McCarthy, Coordinator Gateway Environmental Study Center (1993-2002)

***Note:** Just prior to the printing of this newsletter, DOE released a statement indicating a reprieve for the Center. It stated "that a decision has been made to extend the Gateway contract" and acknowledged that "Gateway is clearly a unique situation that warranted special consideration and is highly valued by many educators and members of the greater community." Kudos to all who supported GESC through letters and emails!

TEEP IV – THE ALBANY SYMPOSIUM

By Mike Zamm

On November 15, 2002, TEEP (Teacher Environmental Education Preparation)—a collaboration coordinated by New York University's Wallerstein Collaborative for Urban Environmental Education, the Council on the Environment of New York and EEAC—held the fourth in a series of symposia designed to foster the growth of pre-service teacher training in environmental education.

Eighteen colleges have attended the symposia, including four—SUNY Cortland, NYU, Cornell and SUNY Plattsburg—at the 11/15 gathering in Albany.

The Albany symposium was an effort to create new opportunities for EE to expand in teacher prep programs.

After a series of introductory presentations, the 20 attendees representing the aforementioned colleges, the State Education Department (SED), the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), EEAC, the Council on the Environment and others, participated in a series of workshops. The first session involved three separate group meetings, each discussing visions for a statewide EE center from which teacher preparation and other EE functions would emanate. The center is an idea first presented at earlier symposia by Dr. Beth Klein of SUNY Cortland.

After lunch three additional dialogues were held:

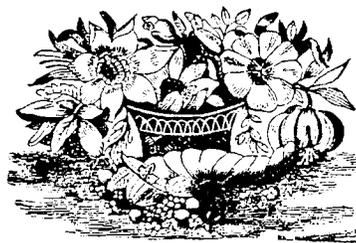
- Bridging the gap; establishing the need for EE in NYS
- Higher education concerns and institutional support from TEEP
- Partnerships and new resources

Seasonal Employment Opportunities at Wave Hill!

Wave Hill is currently seeking Counselors and a Co-Director for its Environmental Science Summer Camp for Girls. For further information, contact Rob Lieblein, School Partnerships Manager at 718-549-3200 ext. 396 and robl@wavehill.org, or visit our website at www.wavehill.org.

Reports from the dialogue groups were followed by a discussion of visions for the statewide EE center and closing remarks by EEAC Chair Mary Leou. All agreed to make efforts for the next symposium to be held at NYU in March 2003.

The Albany symposium provided more support for the EE center idea, which will be one focus of the spring 2003 meeting. The meeting also generated one new significant strategy for infusing EE into teacher prep programs, what Rich Gervais of the SED called "cognates." Cognates are courses incorporated into a major that are not part of that major from a specific content point of view. Even though there is currently no certification in EE, a prospective teacher majoring in biology, for example, could take 27 credits in bio, but could also take 6-9 credits in environmental science as a "cognate" and still receive a degree and certification as a biology teacher. This approach could be used across the board in the sciences and social studies to infuse EE into teacher training while allowing prospective teachers to meet specific licensing requirements. It's imperative that we get the word out to colleges of education about this approach, and this will be another focus of the March 2003 gathering.



Attention Garden Lovers: Share Your Passion

Wave Hill's annual Garden Guide Training program will take place on Thursdays, March 13, 20, 27, and April 3 and 10 from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Prospective Guides should have an interest in gardening, familiarity with botanical names, and the ability to speak in front of a group of people. The training program requires guides to participate in five orientation sessions, attend monthly meetings, and contribute a minimum of 10 hours of tours during the spring and fall seasons. Interviews will be conducted to fill a limited number of openings for this program. For more information on the Wave Hill Garden Guides or to apply, contact Volunteer Coordinator Liz Sharp at 718-549-3200 ext. 227 or lizs@wavehill.org.