

Harbor Watch Expands to Meet the Challenge



This summer the Earthplace Harbor Watch program is testing water samples from over 150 unique sites from Holly Pond in Stamford to 10 test sites on the Pequonnock River in Trumbull. With each new river, stream or estuary we add to our monitoring program, more hot spots are found and the scope of the problems facing our watershed continues to grow. Each site generates the need for dozens of lab tests conducted by volunteer teams working in lab space that has reached its practical capacity. We are pleased to announce that The Fairfield County Community Foundation and The Jeniam Foundation have

both provided leadership grants to fund the renovation and expansion of our water quality testing lab. Their support is critical to our expansion plans and our program mission to reverse the biological decline of Long Island Sound. The new lab will more than double our capacity and allow up to six research teams to work simultaneously, increasing our ability to conduct water quality research, pollution source detection and field science education. Additionally, the new lab space will provide great hands-on training opportunities for high school students who are interested in applied science. Construction on the new lab facility is expected to begin in early 2015. 🐟



A high school student tests water samples in the Harbor Watch lab.

Environmental Learning, Not Just for Kids

Based on the success of last year's environmental film screenings and discussions, our new Environmental Learning Series, jointly produced with the Westport Green Task Force, presents programming focused on local and global environmental issues that affect our natural ecosystems and climate. Today we hear about climate change and health issues caused by pollution from a variety of opinion leaders, some even presenting conflicting points of view. The aim

of the Environmental Learning Series is to add contextual understanding to environmental concerns so participants leave with an understanding of what local actions they can take to mitigate negative consequences. Each program in the series will bring in topical experts to help sort out the facts and lead an informed discussion that will prepare all of us to make smart individual choices that help protect our natural resources for future generations. 🌿



Panel speakers for the documentary Trashed (L-R): Dr. Barbara Reck from Yale's Industrial Ecology Department; Diane Duva from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and Steve Edwards, Director of Westport's Public Works Department.



Westport First Selectman Jim Marpe (third from right) joins the full house for our most recent Environmental Learning Series discussion.

NEW ALL-DAY CHILDCARE PROGRAM

Working Parents Need All-day Care

There is nothing more important than the quality of early childhood care and education, a concept well known to working parents who need to know their children are cared for by professionals. This fall Earthplace is starting an all-day program for three, four and five year olds, filling a childcare gap for local working parents. The new All-day Program will provide a unique opportunity for young children to participate in a nurturing environment connected with nature.

Studies have confirmed that more time spent playing in a natural environment promotes in children better problem solving, increased creative thinking, more cooperative playing and improved benchmarks for health.

Studies also show that children and students who spend more time outside in nature develop the commitment and vocabulary to begin a lifelong comfort with the natural world. The Earthplace Nursery School staff knows these concepts well, as nearly all of them have post-graduate degrees in early childhood education. The new All-day Program is a perfect complement to our lineup of after-school enrichment programs for students of all ages that provide intentional and guided nature discovery and environmental learning opportunities.

For more information about the All-day Program, visit www.earthplacenurseryschool.org, or call Laurie Linton, Director of the Earthplace Nursery School. 🐦



Children in the All-day Program explore the outdoors in all seasons.

Thanks!



An Eagle Scout's hand-painted bird silhouette.

The Service League of Boys (SLOBs) from Staples High School honored Earthplace as one of their community organizations doing good work, which included undertaking multiple

landscaping projects, providing their own supplies and materials and making an additional financial contribution. Eagle Scouts continue to work on a

variety of projects around the sanctuary including the installation of a shed at the pond to house teaching tools and equipment and beautiful hand-painted birds of prey silhouettes on display in the CT Birds of Prey exhibit. Special thanks

also to Bob Rogers and his workers from Coastal Tree Experts who spent a full day clearing, cutting, chipping and pruning our trees, bushes and shrubs. We are deeply appreciative and delighted by their generous and professional service. 🌳



Trail Blazes and More

This summer we have been hard at work designing and implementing new ways to help visitors get the most out of their experiences at Earthplace. Specifically, we have been focusing our attention on new directional signage on and around the property, as well as educational signage in the Animal Hall.

Early this fall we will be installing new directional signs at each trail junction to make navigating the trails simple for even a first time hiker. We will also be adding Earthplace-logo blazes to trees along the trails to help hikers stay on track when the trails become obscured by leaves or snow. In the Animal Hall we have upgraded our signage to include both content for young readers (placed low on the cages) and for older children and adults (placed higher). We have also added signs to several of the outdoor bird cages with additional information about the species' diet, habitat, and unique characteristics. Visitors to the Animal Hall will also soon be able to supplement their experience with sound and videos accessed via QR codes placed on cages and scanned with a smartphone or tablet. 🐦

Volunteering at Earthplace

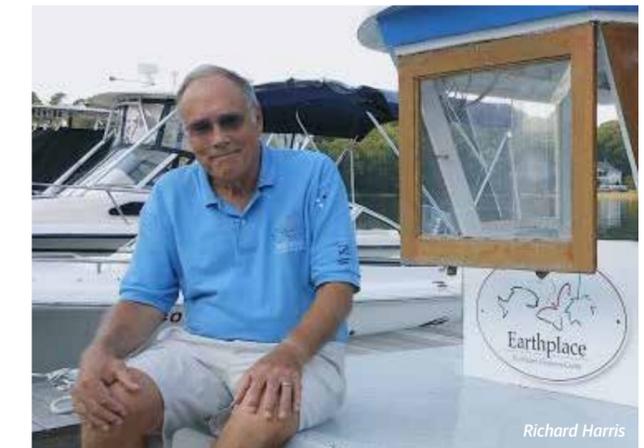
Some of the most important work we do relies on the generosity and dedication of our volunteers. From trail maintenance, gardening and invasive species removal to water sampling, laboratory work and animal care, our volunteers support the work we do here every day.

This year we expanded our community outreach and volunteer program with more projects and days of service for individuals and groups. In addition to our long-time volunteers, we are excited to welcome and thank the Staples High School Service League of Boys (SLOBs), the Eagle Scouts, the Westport chapter of the National Charity League (NCL), the newly formed Fairfield chapter of the NCL and corporate groups from Terex and Whole Foods Westport.



An Animal Hall volunteer works with one of our guinea pigs.

If you are interested in finding your connection to nature through volunteer work at Earthplace, contact Sara Cronquist, our volunteer coordinator, at s.cronquist@earthplace.org. 🐾



Richard Harris

Richard Harris, Harbor Watch Founder, Announces Retirement

After 26 years at the helm of the Earthplace Harbor Watch program, Director Dick Harris is retiring at the end of 2014. Thousands of water samples; hundreds of student interns; dozens of rivers, harbors and streams are all hallmarks of the award-winning water quality monitoring program that Dick has built and fostered over the years. Join us at a retirement celebration in January as we celebrate Dick's career and his legacy for protecting our area waters. 🌊



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Up?

It's a timeless question asked of children by family members, or even complete strangers. For grownups joined in a community organization, the question is more subtle, imbedded in a suite of strategic elements like Mission, Vision and Values—all critical components of a roadmap to the future. This spring, members of the Earthplace Board of Trustees, staff and community leaders joined together to build a three year strategic plan and answer a variant of that time worn question.

For me, the most important part of a strategic plan is establishing a shared vision for our organization and its role in the community. At Earthplace, we envision a community where conscious regard for the natural world guides individual action. It's as if all the children and families who experience nature, in ways as different as nature itself, come to the same understanding and make smarter decisions about nature and the environment for the rest of their lives. To us, it's the objective or aspiration of our mission: to build passion in our community for nature and the environment.

"EARTHPLACE, THE NATURE DISCOVERY AND ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER.

IT JUST FEELS RIGHT, DON'T YOU THINK?"

Probably the highlight for our strategic planning team was the lively discussion that led us to define our role in the communities we serve; a process that answers that basic question. The challenge is to weave together the action parts of our mission—education, experience and action—and to recognize the value of our outputs: experiential education around nature and environmental action based on our Harbor Watch research. Like many components of a strategic plan the answer is subtle too.

Earthplace, the Nature Discovery and Environmental Learning Center. It just feels right, don't you think?

It means we will be intentional in our approach to using nature as a classroom, promoting individual discoveries and impressions that last a lifetime. It means we will openly discuss the positive and negative ways humans interact with nature, at our new Environmental Learning Series. And, it provides a strong foundation to expand our regional water quality monitoring program, combining environmental science and lab experience for high school students.

We invite you to join us at our outdoor Earthplace Festival evening event on October 18th and let the discoveries begin!

Tony
Tony McDowell

New Staff



Veronica Swain
Naturalist Educator

Veronica, hired as a part-time Animal Hall Technician, has been promoted to a full-time Naturalist Educator. She is the former Program Coordinator for the Urban 4-H Gardening Program in Bridgeport, CT and recently completed her degree in Environmental Education from Southern Connecticut State University. Veronica lives in Fairfield with her husband and many beloved pets.



Shannon Wheeler
Animal Care Technician

Shannon began at Earthplace as a college volunteer. After working with a New Zealand conservation group, Shannon returned to Earthplace as an Animal Care Technician and will be studying part-time in a Veterinary Technician Program.



Chantelle Hoffman
Finance Assistant

Chantelle received her B.B.A. in Financial Accounting from Western Connecticut State University and is the former Financial Manager of Jan-Pro Cleaning Systems in Norwalk, CT. Chantelle is currently pursuing her MBA and lives in Norwalk with her son Damian.



Kelly Russo
All-day Program Lead Teacher

Kelly brings many years of experience to the new Earthplace All-day Program for preschoolers. During her more than 20 years in the early childhood field, Kelly has taught two, three and four year olds and has spent 14 years at the Westport Weston Family Y. Kelly has a two-year degree in Early Childhood and is currently finishing her B.S. in Child Studies. With her stellar recommendations from Y parents, we are looking forward to an exciting new program at Earthplace.



Earthplace

The Nature Discovery Center

10 Woodside Lane
Westport, CT 06880
www.earthplace.org

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Save the date for the Earthplace Festival!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18 and SUNDAY OCTOBER 19, 2014

Come celebrate the beauty and bounty of fall with a weekend of spectacular outdoor activities.

At our Saturday night adults-only bonfire take a ride on the mechanical bull or a creepy stroll down our haunted trail while enjoying food, drinks and live music.

Sunday will be a day full of festive activities and seasonal crafts exciting for the whole family. Join us for critter encounters, local bands, an artisans' market, food trucks and more!



Earthplace News

www.earthplace.org The Nature Discovery and Environmental Learning Center

UPCOMING EVENTS:

9/3:
Fall Preschool Adventures, 3pm and After-school Adventures, 4pm
[Event Information Here](#)

9/X:
Fall Fair Family Day Event
[Event Information Here](#)

9/9:
Animal Hall Volunteer Orientation
6pm

9/27-28:
Tropical Fish Show Weekend
[Event Information Here](#)

10/X:
Living Room Event
[Event Information Here](#)

10/18-10/19:
Earthplace Festival Weekend. Save the Date! See page 6.

11/29:
Earthplace Turkey Walk and Trot
[Event Information Here](#)



Anthony Zemba (R) and _____ (L) get to work surveying the sanctuary.

Enhancing Your Experience In Nature

Even open woodland spaces like those at Earthplace need to be tended. Left alone, the quality of our nature sanctuary is constantly challenged by non-native invasive species, potential insect infestation, damage from feeding deer and storms. With the help of two generous donors, we have just embarked on our first conservation and management plan, an important tool in maintaining and protecting the healthy species and biological diversity found in our well-traveled wildlife sanctuary. We contracted with a company that specializes

in environmental engineering and hydrogeology issues to assess our natural areas with regard to core habitats, sensitive microhabitats and an overview of the site's biodiversity. Survey work will include multiple visits throughout the year to account for seasonality and differential resource use. The final assessment will identify areas of our sanctuary suitable for environmental education, including demonstration areas for invasive species management and a high woods area for an outdoor classroom that will promote nature discovery.

