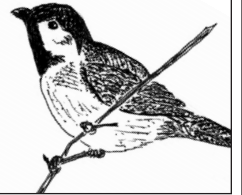


Fiddleheads and Feathers



The Newsletter of the Melinda Gray Ardia Environmental Foundation, Ltd.

Fall 2008

Greetings and Happy Holidays!

We wish you joy, peace and good health this holiday season, and a very bright and optimistic 2009! The Melinda Gray Ardia Environmental Foundation has been affected, as we all have, with the recent financial downturn. Our endowment has decreased considerably, but the Board was still able to support our core programs this year. In fact, we received over 100 applications for environmental curriculum grants this year. This indicates that in a shrinking economy, non-traditional support for innovative and important educational programs is more important than ever. We were able to identify and support four of the best applications, but many strong applications for our help were denied.

We realize that you get many worthy requests for donations, but please consider us when you make your charitable donations this year. Our funds go to directly benefit many projects both close to home in New York State, as well as worldwide. We thank you for your support and wish you the best in the upcoming holiday season.

Daniel Ardia, President

Brooklyn Lead Poisoning Education Update

Jodie Stewart and Erick Rowley, Secondary School for Law

This report was submitted by Ms. Stewart and Mr. Rowley, 8th grade teachers in Brooklyn, NY, who were awarded a curriculum grant from the MGAEF this year.

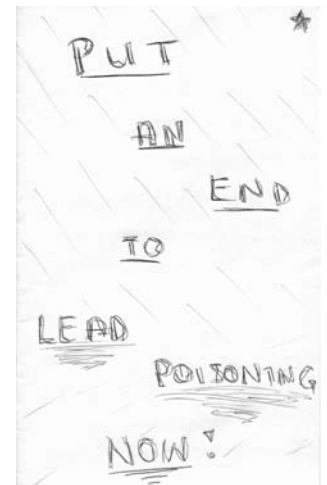
Thank you so much for your support in assisting us to complete our project "Lead Poisoning and Its Effect on Brooklyn: A Case Study". Students benefited greatly from this experience.

To begin, students completed an interdisciplinary study of the ways in which lead poisoning affects childrens' development. Students then completed a series of tests in which they examined water, paint, and building material samples for lead and other harmful chemicals. In addition to these activities, students also conducted an in-depth examination of grassroots organizations in Brooklyn and the effect of community groups on this social issue. Students got involved on a personal level as they took

the information they learned back to their homes and communities.

At the conclusion of this examination, students created and distributed information brochures to community members and wrote letters to local congressmen explaining their views on this, suggesting solutions to the problems facing many Brooklyn youths. The Melinda Gray Ardia Foundation's assistance helped our students get involved in social action and to use academic work to create positive change in their neighborhoods. We are all so grateful.

Again thank you so much for your support. Your generous grant has not only allowed us to complete this unit of study with our current students, but will help us to conduct this study again in coming years. In addition, you have helped us to increase awareness of an important environmental issue in our region.



ALL About
LEAD poisoning



Two brochures produced by students to educate their community about the dangers of lead poisoning.



Board Member Profile: Dan Ardia



After many years of graduate study, our President Dan Ardia is now an Assistant Professor of Biology at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA. While he misses the rolling hills of the Finger Lakes Region, the pastoral setting and Amish countryside of Lancaster do have their charms. As a professor of Biology at a Liberal Arts College, Dan is expected to excel at both teaching and research.

His teaching duties include Evolution, Animal Behavior, Conservation Biology, and Ecology. The best part of teaching at a small school is the ability to work closely with students.

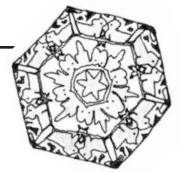
As a field biologist, his research allows him to spend a lot of time outdoors. His current research projects include studying patterns of reproductive behavior in tree swallows and house wrens and examining physiological tradeoffs in insects. In addition, he is affiliated with a National Science Foundation grant

that sends recent college graduates to Latin America to study patterns of evolution in behavior in birds. It is a great opportunity for Dan and his students.

In addition to his formal duties, Dan is also playing a leadership role in the college's sustainability efforts. Planning is under way to create a field station where students interested in the environment can study outdoors. At the same time, the college is preparing to integrate environmental sustainability into the curriculum and college community.

Dan was married to Melinda Gray Ardia for a brief 16 months at the time of her tragic accident in January, 1996. He was one of the co-founders of the MGAEF, and is proud that his experience with the MGAEF has given him experience and insight into environmental education. In fact, his work with teachers through MGAEF has spurred him to develop summer workshops for teachers to help them gain confidence and experience in teaching controversial subjects in the classroom, including evolution and ecology.

Dan and his wife Ellie Rice were married in 2003, and are the proud parents of Susannah and Thomas.



Fish and Fun at Cranberry Lake

Reflections from Amanda Atkins



Amanda conquers her fish handling phobia

My name is Amanda Atkins, and I am now a junior at Clarence High School in Clarence, New York. This past summer, I attended the Adirondacks Field Studies Program at CLBS (Cranberry Lake Biological Station). Let's be honest here. Being a teenager, and finding out I had to spend a week without my computer, without my cell phone and without my friends, was a bit of a shock for me. But believe it or not, all of that changed as soon as I arrived at camp.

This program gave me the chance to meet new people I would otherwise not have met, from all over the state. At the

camp, we shared more than just time together – we shared friendships.

Our one requirement while attending the camp, was to work on and complete a project by the end of the week in a small group. Unlike projects for school, this one had very few restraints, and incorporated any idea of our choice. We chose to compare the vegetation along the riparian zone, to the fish population in the surrounding water. This project required a large amount of time spent dealing with aquatics, and therefore handling fish. We'll just say that handling fish is not my favorite thing in the world to do. With the help of my counselors and my new friends, I was able to not only conquer my fears, but have fun while doing it.

I feel extremely honored to have had the opportunity to attend such a life-changing program. Having to leave the camp was an emotional experience in which I shed tears of joy, remembering all the new friends I had made, and all the jubilant moments we shared together. It was a week I know I won't soon forget, and has left me with memories that will last for a lifetime.

The MGAEF sponsored four high school students to attend the 2008 Adirondacks Field Study Program at Cranberry Lake Biological Station: Amanda Atkins and Nicole Curtis from Clarence, NY, and Dori Arbogast and Jordan DiSanto from Newark, NY.



Two-Time Award Winner!

Laura Hahn, a senior at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, was awarded this year's MGAEF college scholarship. Laura is unique in that 3 years ago, as a high school student, she was also selected by MGAEF to attend the Field Studies Program at Cranberry Lake. Here is an update on what Laura is doing these days.

I am in my senior year of school at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. I will be receiving a Bachelors degree in Natural History and Interpretation.

While at school I compete on the school's oldest club, the Woodsmen Team. This year I am the President and get to do all the fun paperwork associated with it! This past year our women's team took first place at the north eastern conclave called "Spring Meet." My proudest moment in the three years I have been on this team was that day.

From the blustery city of Syracuse, I would like to move to the blustery area of western Massachusetts. I would like to work on a teaching farm in that area of the country.

This past summer I worked on a similar farm on Martha's Vineyard (The FARM Institute) where I taught

continued on next page



MGAEF awards four environmental curriculum grants!



From a small regional foundation started in the tragic year of 1996, we have grown to encompass a world-wide presence. This year, we received 100+ applications from teachers seeking our support for their innovative environmental curriculum ideas. The teachers applying spanned the United States and the World at large, including proposals from Cameroon, Costa Rica, Canada, Kenya, Brazil, and Nigeria. The Board of Directors had a difficult time deciding among so many strong proposals, but eventually we chose four proposals to support. Our dream is to grow our endowment to be able to support all the worthy and important proposals that we receive.

Our most northern grant ever went to the Native Village of Eyak in Cordova, Alaska. The village of Eyak requested funding for an environmental education program on global climate change (skeptical on global climate change? - see the data for yourself and then decide at www.ipcc.ch). Far northern communities are on the frontline of climate change as they experience melting glaciers and permafrost, frequent flooding, and insect infestations from the increased standing water. The goal of Eyak is to engage their students in science-based learning focused on local changes in climate. Our funds will support testing equipment, publishing materials, and support for field trips to local ecosystems. In addition to increasing awareness and knowledge of local and global climate change, our grant will provide support for a program that inspires students to pursue a career in science. Some of our funds will pay for college application fees in a highly impoverished area.

We continued our desire to fund international programs by supporting a grant that links schools between Costa Rica and Illinois in the study of the importance of protecting watersheds. Spoon River College in Macomb, Illinois, has spearheaded a link between local schools and schools bordering the Children's Rainforest in Costa Rica. Students in both countries will research water quality and link their results to larger patterns of land use in the communities.

Our third proposal, the Canaan Street Lake Turtle Study, will give students in New Hampshire hands-on experience with studying and conserving wildlife. The project involves

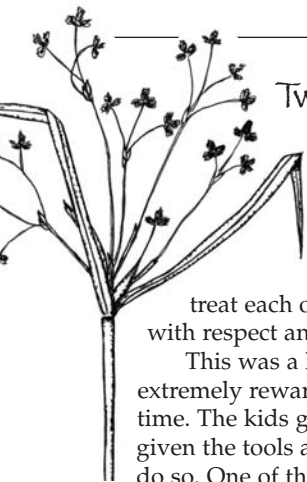
capturing, measuring, marking, and releasing turtles in a lake adjacent to the school. The students will test hypotheses about the biotic and abiotic factors that affect turtle behavior, survival, and growth by recatching marked turtles over time and measuring ecological factors in the lake. Because of the longevity of turtles, a strength of the study is that students for many years will build a long-term database of the health of their local lake. This important lesson will allow students to see the connectedness and long-term nature of conservation.



Turtle behavior, survival and growth will be studied by New Hampshire students. Photo courtesy of: FreeNaturePictures.com

Our final award went to the Baldwin Bio-Monitoring project in Quincy, Illinois. The project will examine whether wildlife and public areas can coexist by creating observation stations and data collection areas in and around the school campus. They will set up and monitor feeding stations, artificial burrows, nesting boxes for birds, bats, and frogs, among other activities. They will be able to compare different habitats and chart changes over time. Their results will be of interest to both local planners and other schools through the region and the country. We are excited to support these four exciting and creative projects.

Two-Time Award Winner! cont'd



children of all ages how to grow their own vegetables, milk a goat, spin wool and

treat each other and the land with respect and gratitude.

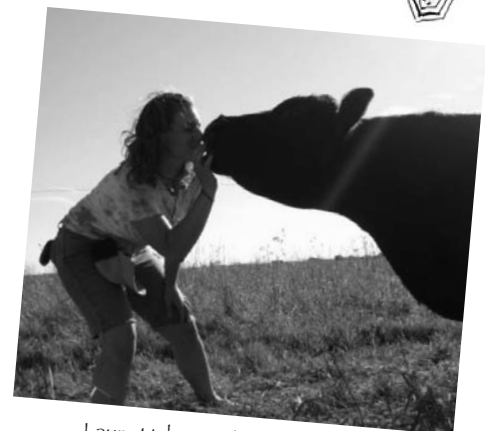
This was a hard task but extremely rewarding at the same time. The kids grow so much when given the tools and opportunity to do so. One of the little girls at the

farm came her first week and used to scream "There's nature on me!" After her second week at the farm she was

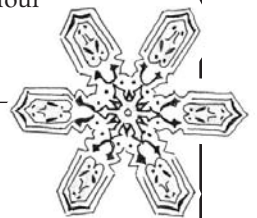
mucking the piglets stall with out a problem and a big smile on her face.

It is amazing to me that a child can understand that the farmer doesn't get the two dollars for the tomato while their parents can't even understand where the tomato comes from.

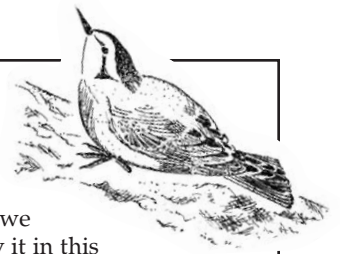
With all of these experiences behind me I would someday like to open my own teaching farm. I would like to help children and adults learn the values of cultivating the earth as well as the importance of cultivating relationships between each other and their community.



Laura Hahn teaching children to appreciate nature!



Newark Students Attend Camp Rushford



Last year, the MGAEF chose two middle school students from Newark, NY and Clarence, NY to attend Camp Rushford. Morgan Daily and Bethany Kommer were chosen from Newark, and submitted an excellent report sharing all they learned. Here are some excerpts from their report.



Hanging Bog Wildlife Management Area
at Camp Rushford

Melinda Gray Ardia was a beloved science teacher and mentor at Newark Middle School. She taught environmental science and earth science, and was also the girls modified swim coach and advisor to the yearbook. After she passed away, the school and her family wanted the legacy of her to live on. So they set up the Melinda Gray Ardia Foundation that sends two students from Newark to an environmental science camp each year. Melinda was a wonderful teacher who made science fun for her students and even today is still not forgotten. Bethany's aunt and uncle were former students of Melinda's and she was a friend of the family. She inspired both of them to pursue an education that involved science and a love of the environment.

By accepting this award, we both attended Camp Rushford, a DEC environmental science camp in Caneadea, NY, in Allegheny County. The age range of the students at camp is 12-14 years of age. At this camp, the children

learn many things ranging from how some animals use camouflage to survive, to the impact that humans have on our beautiful environment.

When we finally got to the camp, it was beautiful. The camp had its own pond. The log cabins that were near the pond were beautiful. The scenery just took our breath away, but even though the camp looked so nice, we didn't know what to expect. Neither of us had ever been away at camp before. The camp was so big.

In addition to playing games and just having fun, we also were taught about the ecosystem and the three R's (reduce, reuse and recycle). When we went to the field, we learned that there are more insects and small creatures out there that we didn't even know about. They are using camouflage to survive in nature. Every time we

caught a bug, we would identify it in this book and learn about them. It was so fun. We also learned about the impact that humans have on the environment. We learned that because we just throw things out car windows, into the garbage, into lakes, rivers, oceans or just dumping it out on the sidewalk we are hurting the animals that live near or in those areas. The animals find it and think

that it is food; they eat it and sometimes even choke on it. The garbage that we use can actually hurt the earth because some things like Styrofoam cups take years to fully decompose. That is why we need to start using REUSEABLE cups, water bottles, and things like that. Also, even when it is time for new reusable things, you need to dispose of them properly.

The week went really fast. We had a really great time. Because most of the students that attended the camp are from Western New York, we have run into some of our friends from camp since we came home. This camp was the best experience we think a student could get. We thank you for sponsoring us and we hope that the next people have just as good of a time as we did. So thank you very much – we learned a lot in that week and learned to view the world in a different perspective.

Holiday Gift Ideas!

MGAEF Wildlife Notecards – A perfect holiday gift, each 12 notecard set features 6 different color photos of African animals taken by Melinda while in Kenya with the Peace Corps. These beautiful cards can be used for any occasion. Cost is \$10.00 per set, plus \$1.00 shipping.

Gift "In Honor or Memory Of" – A meaningful way to honor or remember a special person! Make a contribution in their name to MGAEF, where your gift will advance environmental education, and we will send an acknowledgment letter to the honoree or family. Perfect for holidays, birthdays, and remembrance. Please indicate honoree or family name and address so we can send them an acknowledgment letter.

Thank You For Your Support

We depend on your support to provide these programs in the future. Your donation goes directly toward educational programs: our operating costs are minimal (<0.5% of annual budget) because we maintain no offices and all administration is done through volunteer board members. All contributions are tax-deductible.

If you are able, please help us reach more students locally and around the world by sending your check to "MGAEF" in the enclosed gift envelope. We are ever grateful for your support.



Please Help Us Save Trees!

If you no longer wish to receive our newsletter, please send an email to Suzanne Murphy at SGMurphy17@aol.com. Thank you!