



Environmental Focus

Summer 2010

"an aesthetic, unpolluted environment with a natural and historic heritage"

BCEQ's 2010 "Keeping It Reel" Environmental Education Awards DeWitt Clinton HS Teacher, John Adams HS & PS 76 Students Honored

At our annual year-end BBQ on June 9th, BCEQ presented our "Keeping it Reel" Environmental Education Awards. Named after co-founder **Helen Reel**, this year's awardees were recognized for their efforts on behalf of the Bronx Environment. **Ray Patinas** is an English Literature Teacher at Clinton High School who voluntarily planted a victory garden on the campus for his students to learn the origins of food. **Marie** and **Marquetta Francis** volunteered to clean up their local school yard so the community could use the new open space.

Thank you to the Education Committee and its new Chair **Dr. Dena Robins** for this year's awardees.

EDUCATOR AWARD:

Ray Patinas

*English Literature Teacher
Clinton High School*



STUDENT AWARDS:

Marie Francis

Jane Addams High School

Marquetta Francis, PS 76



L to R—**Mark Francis** (parent of awardees), **Marquetta Francis**, **Dr. Dena Robbins** (BCEQ), **I.C. Levenberg-Engel** (BCEQ), & **Marie Francis**.



Always networking, **Theresa Lato** wearing her banner BCEQ t-shirt,, talking with **Celia Budin** (top left) and then **New York Botanical Garden President Gregory Long** (bottom left). On the right, in her Grand Concourse apartment — the BCEQ HQ for many years!

BCEQ Founder's Legacy

Theresa Lato

February 17, 1912—March 16, 2010

In 1970, Theresa founded the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality. This was long before most people knew what environmentalism was.

Theresa struggled to keep BCEQ alive in those early years, as her ideas were before their time. She spent many, many hours working on the BCEQ Newsletter, researching and writing groundbreaking articles. BCEQ barely survived for several years, but is today a strong, active organization, and the crowning achievement of Theresa's life.

She will be greatly missed.

If you wish to donate to B.C.E.Q. in honor of Theresa please visit the link - <http://www.bceq.org/donate/>

BCEQ Board meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the month, except for July and August, from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

For more info please email: volunteer@bceq.org

Ask Ivy!

Ivy is a local environmental educator who is available to answer your questions about environmental topics. Ask Ivy is written for entertainment/informative purposes only and doesn't necessarily represent the views of BCEQ nor its editorial staff. If you have a question for Ivy email her at askivy@bceq.org or write to her at the address in the masthead below.

Dear Ivy,

I have been watching the coverage of the oil spill in the gulf in what has been described as the worst environmental disaster in our nation's history. As an environmental advocate, I am distressed by the pictures of the increasingly oiled beaches and wildlife. Will this have any long term effects on our ecology in the northeast coast?

Concerned on the Concourse

Dear Concerned:

Most people watching the pictures of birds covered in oil and tar balls washing up on beaches are distressed and probably feeling a little helpless as we sit many miles away not sure of what the full environmental effect will be. What we are dealing with is a unique situation in that the oil is not technically "spilled" onto the surface of the water from a tanker but rather gushing from an underground well.

The oil has the capacity to cover birds, fish, dolphins and other marine life. Hard hit are sea birds that must dive into the water to catch fish covering themselves with oil in the process. It is estimated that most of these birds die without surfacing and therefore never get officially counted as the tally of dead birds rises.

Even cleaning the spill can be dangerous to the fragile ecosystems. The dispersants that are meant to encapsulate the oil and help break it down are toxic and the oil globules they create cause algae to die. Yeah I know, algae, not as impressive as the image of an oil covered pelican but it matters because of the role algae plays in that food chain.

As algae die the oxygen in the water decreases and fish must leave. Shellfish and bottom dwellers like crabs though do not flee as fast as the fish do and many die. As the price for your seafood dinner rises those little green algae will matter a lot. As some oil sinks to the bottom it can potentially be there for decades.

From personal perspectives, we can only hope that the oil from British Petroleum's Deepwater Horizon disaster does not reach our shores. Even so, this disaster will most certainly affect our economy and our quality of life.

As environmental advocates, we need to become proactive watchdogs. While BCEQ cannot keep abreast of all environmental topics, other national organizations work on things where an accident such as this can impact us. The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is one such group that has been advocating on our behalf. Visit their web page for more information. Be sure to follow their lead and write letters to elected officials and agency heads, and donate whatever you can to help these causes.

BCEQ members can be proud of the work of NRDC – especially spokespersons Robert Kennedy (Hudson Riverkeeper) and Robert Redford (actor/director). NRDC President Frances Beinecke, a Bronx resident, has been active in community issues and was featured as one of the BCEQ Focus Environmentalist of the Month. Last month, Frances was appointed by President Obama to the National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling.

Ivy

(see the last page for important links)

Bronx Council for Environmental Quality



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Thank you for your support.

Environmental Focus Volunteer Reporters/Proofers: AskIvy, ML Ramirez, Sara Kempton, Jane E.S. Sokolow, IC Levenberg-Engel and Supervising Editor Karen Argenti.

www.bceq.org

P.O. Box 265, City Island Station, The Bronx, NY 10464

In accepting the "Keeping It Reel" Environmental Education Teacher Award, **Ray Pultinas**, English Lit Teacher from De Witt Clinton High School read the following quote because of its similarity to the Oil Spill disaster in the Gulf.

You're glumping the pond where the
Humming-Fish hummed
No more can they hum, for their gills are all
gummed.
So I'm sending them off. Oh, their future is dreary.
They'll walk on their fins and get woefully weary,
In search of the some water that isn't so smeary.

From the *Lorax* by **Dr. Seuss**:
<http://www.unahi.org/quotes/the-lorax.htm>

BCEQ's Water Conference Examines Harlem River Water Quality

On March 17th, B.C.E.Q. hosted its 9th Annual Water Conference at Manhattan College. The topic of the conference was, *Examining Harlem River Water Quality: Inputs, Effects and Solutions*. It featured presentations on the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary program, the state of our sewers, history of the Harlem River and using Google Mapping along the Harlem River.



Jerry Willis, US National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, presenting on Mapping along the Harlem River using Google to ID sites.

After the presentations attendees enjoyed refreshments, visited information tables, networked and chose a break out session to attend. Break out sessions were about the Hudson River Estuary Action Agenda, Public Participation for CSO's and Google Mapping places of interest along the Harlem River. Over 80 Bronx residents came out to learn more about the Harlem River.



Sid Horenstein, Environmental Educator Emeritus, American Museum of Natural History presenting the History of the Harlem River.

For info about the Harlem River and to find out about next year's conference on the East Bronx Waterways please visit www.bceq.org



Karen Argenti (BCEQ) leading the Break Out on increasing CSO public participation to protect the Harlem River.

Bronx Parks Speak Up Shapes Up, Green & Clean

The 16th Annual Bronx Parks Speak Up was held on Saturday, April 10th at Lehman College. Over 250 Bronx residents, agency personnel and elected officials attended. The day included presentations about Recycling in New York City, the Harlem River Working Group and Shape Up New York. There was also a very informative panel discussion about sustainable green development. It helped attendees learn about what makes a building green and various green projects in our borough. The day also included workshops on rain water harvesting, organic growing techniques and indoor composting. If you're interested in getting involved in planning the **17th Annual Speak Up**, please send an email to bxspeakup@hotmail.com.



< Chauncy Young, Highbridge Community Life Center presenting about the Harlem River Working Group.

Ryan Treasure and Jose Quintana > NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene, leading participants in stretching exercises as part of their *Shape Up New York* presentation.



Important Links

BCEQ: www.bceq.org

Hydraulic Fracturing

EPA Hydraulic Fracturing Research Study Info on how to present comments can be found at <http://bit.ly/d31Jju>

EPA Approves NYS's List of Impaired Waters

<http://bit.ly/boczSY>

The Gulf of Mexico Disaster NRDC Disaster in the Gulf

<http://bit.ly/doLLYn>

BP/Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Documents

<http://bit.ly/aWlcCM>

EPA Response to BP Spill in the Gulf of Mexico

<http://www.epa.gov/bpspill/>

The **Theresa Lato Networking Award**, our first Award of its kind, was presented to our President Ira Charles Levenberg-Engel or "IC" (as he is commonly called). *In the tradition of BCEQ Founder and President Emeritus, Theresa Lato, we recognize the accomplishments of IC in advocating for and maintaining connections in the Bronx Environment by "KEEPING IN TOUCH."*

We sang these words to the tune of Blue Moon!

I C with you we're never alone
Your license plate sets the tone
To save dear GAIA our home

I C you knew just what we were there for
Environment'ly prepared for
A world we know we can care for

He appears and soon has us reeling
To cajole us until we all fade
His meetings give us that old feeling
Like we're all back in ninth grade

I C though you send too many e-mails
Keeping in touch well never fails
We'll make "earth friendly" the Bronx Tale



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City Island Station
The Bronx, NY 10464
www.bceq.org

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Is your BCEQ membership up-to-date?

If the date on your mailing label has expired please visit www.bceq.org to renew your membership.
If you wish to save paper and get an electronic version, email enewsletter@bceq.org Thank you!