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New York District



## **Earth Day Events Uses New York and New Jersey Harbor as Outdoor Classroom for Area Students**

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**(April 28, 2006) Elizabeth, NEW JERSEY** - More than 200 area students joined environmental community leaders throughout the region today to celebrate Earth Day at the Elizabeth Marina City Dock.

Students from St. Patrick High School, Elizabeth High School, Reilly Middle School, and Albert Einstein Academy spent the morning learning about the health of the New York and New Jersey Harbor Estuary, the effects of pollution and the everyday importance of Earth Day through interactive educational stations.

The stations were hosted and taught by a variety of professionals in the academic and environmental field including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Coast Guard, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Harbor Estuary Program/New Jersey Sea Grant, The New York and New Jersey Baykeeper and Keane University.

“This third annual Earth Day event was a great opportunity to energize the students in Elizabeth, our future environmental leaders, about the health of their own estuary in the New York and New Jersey Harbor, and understand the connection between land and water,” said Lt. Col. Charles H. Klinge, Deputy District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “Students had an opportunity to speak openly with Corps biologists, engineers, archeologist, and other partners in estuary, to learn about the rich history of our harbor, its current state and got a hands-on view of its marine life and ongoing port activities.”

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The event was sponsored by the Elizabeth River/Arthur Kill Watershed Association in conjunction with City of Elizabeth Mayor Chris Bollwage, the Elizabeth Marina, and the offices of Senator Menendez and Congressman Payne.

“This event helps our youth learn about the environment and the natural resources in and around our City,” stated Mayor Chris Bollwage. “These young men and women will one day inherit what nature has given us and what we must preserve for their future. I hope this experience will motivate them to become pro-active in environmental issues and in finding solutions to environmental problems.”

“These environmental workshops provide a forum for our local students to learn from environmental stewards in our community in personal setting outside of the classroom,” said Michelle Doran McBean, CEO of Future City Inc., the non-profit organization that sponsors Earth Day and Estuary Day in Elizabeth, N.J. “Each year our program has grown significantly and it has been because of the commitment of the agencies represented today and the hard work and dedication of our local schools to bring their students to these educational events.”

The earth day program kicked off with an environmental harbor inspection aboard the Corps’ vessel, the *Hocking*, where many students cruised through the Arthur Kill Channel for the first time. On the boat, students learned about the historical significance of Shooter’s Island, reviewed the types of habitat living in the estuary, and received an overview of significant, ongoing Corps activities to improve the watershed.

On the dock, students rotated through stations that included visual exhibits such as touch tanks and aquariums with marine life, as well as interactive pollution displays, water quality testing and an exhibit depicting the life of an oyster. Students were also able to tour a Coast Guard vessel and learn about pollution response and oil spills.

“The men and women of the Coast Guard,” said Capt. Glenn Wiltshire, Commanding Officer, Coast Guard Sector New York and Captain of the Port, New York/New Jersey, “have a special responsibility to ensure that our waterways remain safe and clean. We work closely with our Federal, state, and local government partners each day to investigate and respond to reports of pollution in our waterways.

“As we celebrate Earth Day again this year, I hope we take the opportunity to increase environmental awareness, especially with our young people since they are our future.”

This is the third annual Earth Day event that was hosted by the Arthur Kill/Elizabeth River Watershed association. In conjunction with Estuary Day in the September, to date, more than two thousand area students have participated in the activities since its inception.

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