

- CEC @ Stuy Cove Park -

A Community Environmental Center Newsletter

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Bringing hands-on environmental
science to New York's youth



Performing Amid Perennials

New York City is home to thousands of performances during the summer. Yet the number of free, outdoor performances has been dwindling the past few years as a result of the suffering economy and funding cuts.

The Community Environmental Center (CEC) recognized the need for free programming in the city, and diligently answered the call last summer. The events held at the Cove were unbelievably popular and crowds of people, both young and old, flocked to the Park to participate in them and learn about energy conservation and urban sustainability.

Building on the summer events of last year such as the "Go Fish" festival and water quality lectures, CEC has taken its promise of providing New York residents

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Solar-Powered Sensation

Can a building be independent of the electrical grid, yet still provide all of the energy it needs? It can if it's Solar 1, the all-solar building currently inhabiting the north end of Stuyvesant Cove Park. Since May, Solar 1 has been harnessing the sun's energy to create usable electricity – even during August's black-out. During that time, the building has attracted numerous visitors from around the city for programs, demonstrations and tours.

Though the building is meant to be a placeholder for a larger Environmental Learning Center to come, Solar 1 is expected to remain in place for the next 4 years until CEC's goal for capital funding has been met. Working with Terra Solar and architects Kiss + Cathcart, CEC was able to integrate numerous "green" features into the building. First and foremost is the array of photovoltaic panels that cover the roof. Angled toward the southern sky for maximum exposure to the sun, the roof is capable of generating 3kW of electricity – enough to power a moderately sized apartment with energy efficient appliances. Additionally, a battalion of batteries linked to the electrical system allows solar energy to be stored for use as needed at night or on cloudy days. Other significant features of the building include recycled aluminum siding; a waterless urinal and low-flush toilet; super-insulated panels that form the structure of the building; passive heating and cooling features; energy efficient windows, doors and lighting; paints with fewer toxins than those typically used; and linoleum flooring made from organic resin.

Currently, Solar 1 provides all its own electricity since it lacks a connection to New



A colorful labyrinth guides the way to Solar 1.

York City's electrical grid. Working with ConEdison, CEC hopes to establish such a connection in order to: 1) incorporate more effective heating and cooling systems which will raise the electric load beyond the system's capacity; 2) give CEC the ability to sell excess electric power back to ConEd at times when Solar 1 produces more energy than it needs (called "net metering"). While utility companies are required by law to establish net-metering agreements for residential solar energy applications, they have no similar obligations for commercial customers. Consequently Solar 1 could provide a model for commercial applications of net-metering, serving as a valuable demonstration tool encouraging the use of renewable energy technologies.

Attention from the press followed soon after Solar 1 opened in June of 2003. First came an article in *Metropolis* which focused on how the Park and the building helped to reclaim part of the City's long neglected waterfront. *Architectural Record* featured an article after the infamous blackout of August 14th, 2003, which cited Solar 1 as a model of on-site

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A Program that Works

For years Kenmore Hall, located on East 23rd street, was a single room occupancy (SRO) rife with corruption, violence, and drugs. In 1994 the Federal Government seized control of the hotel and attempted to bring law and order to the notorious SRO. Yet even with two armed guards at the entrance of the residence, the building remained a haven for illicit activity.

In 1996 a city-wide non-profit, Housing and Services, Inc. (HSI) was granted control of the hotel and began a radical transformation. HSI, with technical assistance from CEC, renovated the space and the once violent and dingy 620-room building was converted to a bright and upscale 320-apartment facility. After construction was complete, previously homeless men and women were ushered from the shelter system into their own newly renovated apartments. The HSI-run building is now the third largest supported living system in New York City.

Jon Cramer, CEC's Project Director for Stuyvesant Cove, worked with HSI Director of



Turning Park plant beds from brown to beautiful.

Property Larry Oaks to develop a partnership whereby HSI would provide workers (known as "clients") to aid in the upkeep of the park.

The clients, usually transient in their previous working habits, have made unbelievable strides forward in their own lives and in the maintenance of the park. After over a year of consistent work, one stated with elation in his voice, "My mother would be so proud of me if she knew that I had worked in one place the whole year."

Jeff Tucker, CEC's Chief Landscaper, has developed the park maintenance program into an entity that creates stability and peace of mind where previously there was little. When asked about HSI clients, Jeff cheerfully complemented his crew. "I wouldn't be able to do all of this without them. They're truly dedicated workers."

Clients express satisfaction in working at a park like Stuyvesant Cove. One of the reasons the Park has been able to hold their attention is the constant rate of change. The plants and trees require constant attention throughout their yearly growing cycles. Workers are also charged with upkeep of the park's facilities and fixtures on a daily basis.

Another HSI client recently confided, "I really like working here. I feel like it's my Park. When people don't take good care of it, I get seriously upset. Like when someone puts their dirty feet on your couch at home." It's that kind of pride that makes the partnership between CEC and HSI so incredibly special. HSI and CEC have recently agreed to expand the partnership to allow another HSI client to join the Park maintenance program. CEC looks forward to developing a deeper and more intensive relationship with HSI in the future.

Performing Amid Perennials

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with instructional classes, workshops, and performances to a level that far exceeded initial expectations.

This summer, CEC provided members of the community with free instructional and performance based workshops. Ranging from performances of Shakespeare to waterfront workshops given by the Urban Divers, CEC mixed events to appeal to different age groups and interest levels. Programming varied as young children and pre-schoolers enjoyed events on bugs, flowers, and soil, to workshops geared towards older individuals such as a tour on herbal medicine, and lessons in ballroom and folk dancing. The New York Hall of Science and Michael Goldstein's Afro Brazil Arts also gave brilliant workshops and performances on-site, which appealed to all age levels.

With the help of choreographer Tamar



The Wendy Osserman Dance Company "hangs out" at Stuyvesant Cove Park

Rogoff and CEC employees such as Program Director Jonathan Cramer and Programming Associate John Garvie, Stuyvesant Cove was host to dancers, musicians, and performance artists. CEC hosted three separate events that highlighted various artistic endeavors in the Park called the Solar Power Performance Series. Events were cited in the New York Times,

A Dedicated Community

Keeping Stuyvesant Cove Park beautiful takes many pairs of helping hands. The gardens need consistent weeding, watering, mulching, and basic landscaping, while litter and other refuse find a home in the Park all too often. Thankfully, the Park has developed a slew of dedicated volunteers who help with the day-to-day maintenance of the Park. Members of the Stuyvesant Cove Park Association (SCPA) help considerably, recruiting volunteers who do everything from pulling weeds to clearing trash from the "beach" at 20th Street. At the heart of these efforts is Joy Garland, Executive Director of the Association and an omnipresent force in the Park. Without her, and all the volunteers, Stuyvesant Cove Park wouldn't be what it is today.

To volunteer in the Park, contact Jeff Tucker, Head Landscaper at (917) 373-6534 or John Garvie, Programming Associate at (718) 784-1444 ext. 140, or visit the SCPA at www.stuyvesantcove.org

Village Voice, NY Sun, Timeout NY, and a broadcast on National Public Radio.

Audiences were drawn to our site from all over Manhattan, and the publicity has sparked more interest about CEC's role at the park. The environmental focus of the series was on renewable energy, specifically solar power. The performances themselves were completely sustainable as all of the lighting, microphones, speakers, and music was powered by the photovoltaic array installed on the roof of Solar 1.

At Stuyvesant Cove performance will partner with environmentalism as people visit the park for music, dance, and drama, and receive a lesson on environmental issues at the same time.

Summer Snapshots

Stuyvesant Cove Programs 2003



Upcoming Projects



Educational programming in Solar 1 is on schedule to begin in early spring. CEC has created a series of in-school environmental science lessons for middle and high schools, that are designed to introduce students to the concepts of urban environmentalism and allow them to gain a greater understanding of sustainability as a whole in a city environment.

CEC was supported in its curriculum development by the National Energy Education Development (NEED) program. The NEED curriculum is a tested series of energy based lessons designed to “[promote] a realistic understanding of the scientific, economic and environmental impacts of energy”.

With help from NEED as well as a panel of educators selected by CEC, each lesson complies with and reinforces school-based curriculum. Additionally, the lessons are designed to mesh with performance standards outlined by the New York State Department of Education.

Fundraising

Funding for the maintenance of the Park comes from private sources. Met Life has agreed to match all contributions made by the tenants of Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village dollar for dollar, while the City’s Economic Development Corporation matches all donations. If you wish to make a tax exempt donation, please make your check out to “CEC-Stuy Cove” and send it to:

Community Environmental Center
43-10 11th Street
LIC, NY 11101

For information on special giving (“In Memoriam”, “In Honor”), call Evi Blaikie at 718-784-1444 x119.



A lesson on photons outside Solar 1.

CEC will collaborate with the Lower East Side Ecology Center (LESEC) as a means of broadening the reach and scope of this environmental science education program. LESEC and CEC have developed an arrangement with schools, such as Baruch High School and the Institute for Collaborative Education (ICE), where students will travel with teachers to Stuyvesant Cove Park and East River Park to receive hands-on environmental lessons.

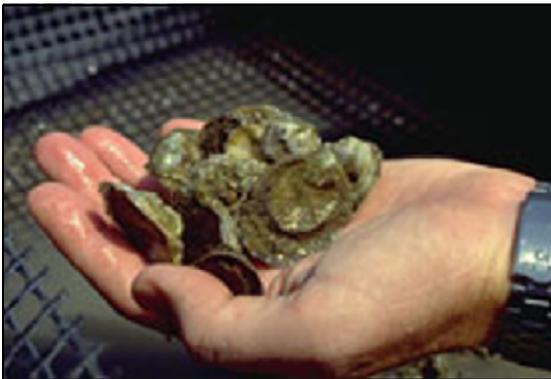
Additionally, CEC is looking to expand its educational programming by adding an after-school program in the space. With the help of programming partners including The Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, Brooklyn Center for the Urban Environment, DEP, and the NY Hall of Science, Stuyvesant Cove’s Solar 1 will become a mecca for environmental awareness. CEC will bring workshops on urban environmental concerns to children in after-school programs in the surrounding neighborhoods. After all, only through consistent educational opportunities can students become empowered with techniques to help promote clean and green spaces within their communities.



Bona Fide Bi-Valves

Get your salt and pepper shakers ready, Community Environmental Center is raising oysters at Stuyvesant Cove Park! Although the majestic mollusks won't be for eating, the Cove will be the baby oyster's home for about a year.

Oysters were once a pivotal species in the Hudson-Raritan estuary. These shellfish offered food and marine habitat before the negative effects



Young Oysters hope to take root in the East River

GLOBE's New East River Home

The GLOBE program, a series of earth science protocols used all over the world as a way of helping students understand their local environment, is coming to Stuyvesant Cove Park in 2004. Sponsored in the USA by NASA and NOAA, the program allows students to collect data regarding air temperature, seasonal change and water quality. Students enter collected data into an online database shared by other students and scientists around the world. The Park's newly deployed weather station makes it the first urban field station used in the program, which usually works with individual schools. Students coming to the Park will receive valuable hands-on experience acquiring real, viable data that provides an opportunity to learn the scientific method, boosting math and reasoning skills.

of pollution, disease, overfishing and waterfront construction in New York and New Jersey destroyed them.

The NY/NJ Baykeeper, seeing the importance of this "keystone" species, began a pilot program to reintroduce oysters back into the estuary with the help of environmental groups such as the CEC. The park initially housed some 4,000 baby oysters in two floating PVC cages. However, because of the often-violent wake that results from tides, boats and water taxis, one of the floats was destroyed and 2,000 of the oysters were lost. Fortunately, the second float is still intact to serve as a valuable teaching tool.

School children will be in charge of collecting and analyzing data on the size and growth patterns of the oysters on a monthly basis. The information collected by the children will aid NY/NJ Baykeeper in planning where oysters grow most efficiently. Oysters have ecological importance since each acts as a water filter that improves water clarity and reduces algae blooms. A mature oyster cleans nearly 50 gallons of water per day.

Those studying these oysters will also aid Baykeeper in accessing whether harmful oyster diseases like MSX and Dermo are still present in the surrounding waterways. These diseases typically attack the oysters in their second or third year. Little is known about these diseases and research done by children will actually aid in helping to establish healthy colonies of disease free oysters.

Hopefully with the help of school children and the Community Environmental Center, oysters can be successfully re-introduced back into their natural habitat, thus creating a healthier and dynamic estuary eco-system.

*To learn more about this project, visit:
www.nynjbaykeeper.org*



Community Environmental Center
43-10 11th Street
Long Island City, NY 11101

Solar-Powered Sensation

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renewable energy production in a city shrouded in darkness.

Solar 1 was prominently featured in two programs during the fall of 2003 that sought to highlight green buildings throughout New York City. The 2003 Green Building Open House, sponsored by GreenHome NYC and the NorthEast Solar Energy Association brought hundreds of people from around the city to Stuyvesant Cove for a tour of Solar 1 and a discussion of its features. A few weeks later, Solar 1 was a featured destination of the Big & Green lecture series sponsored by the Museum of the City of New York. Architects Greg Kiss and Colin Cathcart discussed the state of green design and how its principles are applied in their

work, including Solar 1.

Taken together, these articles and tours have helped raise the profile of Solar 1 and establish its reputation as a cutting-edge model for sustainable practices. With the addition of multimedia equipment, an upgrade of the electrical system and more diverse programming planned for 2004, CEC will bring a wider audience to the site to spread of its message of urban environmentalism even further.



Stuyvesant Cove Park and Solar 1 have recently been featured in: *Metropolis*, *Architectural Record*, *Landscape Architecture*, *The New York Times*, and *Town & Village*. Visit them on the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.cecenter.org/schome.php>