

New Paltz

Water, water everywhere

SUNY New Paltz takes a hard look at H₂O

by Mike Townshend

ALL SEMESTER LONG at SUNY New Paltz, a certain tide has been rising. Flowing through the course work of roughly 200 undergraduates of all disciplines -- including science, art and sociology -- has been an investigation of water.

Students did everything from testing local waterways, looking at how rain reacts to porous pavement on campus versus traditional blacktop. Art students created rain barrels and survival guides either made from or inspired by nature.

For KT Tobin, the associate director of SUNY's Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach, the "Water at SUNY New Paltz Symposium" is helping start a much-needed conversation about water use and climate change. While scientists, social scientists and educators have been talking about increased flooding and Superstorm Sandy, they're doing so within the "silo" of their own discipline.

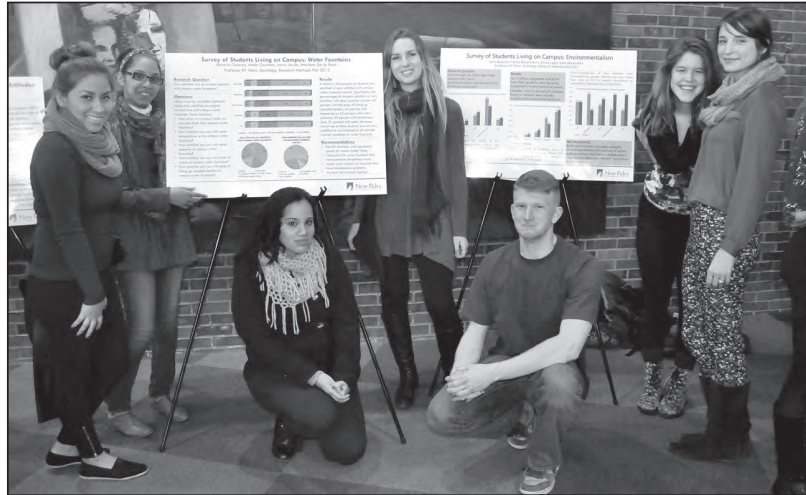
"We need to talk to each other," Tobin said. "We need to talk to each other -- together -- not separately."

For instance, Caitlyn Maceli, a junior studying environmental geochemical science, spent her time this year creating a project to test rainfall events in the ponds on campus -- which are connected to the Walkkill River's watershed.

David Richardson, an assistant professor who mentored Maceli on the project, said he thought it was important for students to get thinking about how their actions impacted water on campus -- and beyond.

"It was nice because we were able to bring some ecological theories and ideas they were talking about in class into the lab -- and understand their direct impacts and how they play a role in the ecology on campus," Richardson said.

Sociology students approached their projects, understandably, from a different angle. They tested people's stated environmental beliefs against their



LAUREN THOMAS

This past year the Center for Research, Regional Education and Outreach (CRREO) at SUNY New Paltz undertook a wide-ranging project to improve watershed resiliency in the Saw Mill Brook, a tributary of the Walkkill River in the Hudson River estuary watershed. SUNY New Paltz students, faculty and staff from a variety of disciplines and departments presented their work related to this project last week at a symposium organized by CRREO. Pictured on the left are SUNY students Inova Javier, Rosario Caceras, Marlene De La Rosa and Annie Courtens who did a survey on the use of water fountains by students living on campus. On the right are John Beischer, Katie Weiskotten and Emma Lagle who did a survey on the environmentalism of students living on campus.

practices.

"Water at SUNY New Paltz" specifically studied the Saw Mill Brook, a tributary of the Walkkill. At least ten professors and about 200 students participated in the multidisciplinary project. It's one part of a much larger initiative -- the Hudson Estuary Watershed Resiliency Project, which is a partnership between Cornell Cooperative Extension and the state Department of Environmental Conservation.

Funding for the project came from a \$219,434 curriculum infusion, which allowed faculty to buy supplies -- "including a water-testing buoy and supplies," Tobin explained. Other funds went to help put green infrastructure in place to improve "watershed resiliency" in the Saw Mill Brook.

Overall, the Hudson Estuary Resiliency Project is aimed at getting people educated about the perils of increased flooding and weather disturbances related to climate change. In the face of Irene, Lee and Sandy, they want to create strategies to help combat that problem.

Matthew Friday, the graduate coordinator for the college's art department, noted that they also looked at the Fallkill Creek in Poughkeepsie as a project area.

In partnership with the Children's Media Project, SUNY New Paltz Art Department grad students studied the ecology of the Fallkill watershed and walked the creek with the high school students.


"So to physically interact and engage with it, rather than talking about it in the abstract or making pretty paintings of it, but to actually go there and say, 'We're going to encounter this site physically before we really care about it,'" Friday said.

The grad students and high schoolers foraged for edible foods to create a meal. Before the first bite of the forest-grown salad greens, they were skeptical.

"Once they got out there and did it, they loved it," he said.

That wasn't all they did though.


"We created this urban forager guide. So this is all made of locally sourced ingredients. The paper is lo-



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Packed house at SUNY New Paltz hears about ongoing impact of Fukushima meltdown

ALMOST THREE YEARS after the world watched in horror as a devastating earthquake and tsunami destroyed much of Japan's coastal communities and the Fukushima nuclear plant exploded before their eyes, area activists and experts gathered last Wednesday night to inform a packed SUNY New Paltz auditorium about the damaged reactors.

New Paltz restaurant owner Youko Yamamoto shed some light on the situation in the area around the Fukushima disaster area. She spoke about the conditions under which people are now forced to live -- with parents eating what they know is contaminated food so their children can have less poisonous helpings. She said farmers are committing suicide, aware their land is poisoned, as is the food it will yield. "The people," she said, "are becoming very depressed, but they do not give up."

Harvey Wasserman, an anti-nuclear activist, noted author and founder of nukefree.org, explained that the fuel rods from the reactor in the partially destroyed and teetering building number four are currently being removed one by one. He said that if any mistakes are made or any other seismic activity occurs, this could lead to an uncontrolled radiological event possibly resulting in massive evacuations around the Pacific and North America.

"This is an apocalyptic situation," Wasserman said. "Radiation is off the charts, uncontrolled and unmeasured with no end in site."

Panelists decried what they called a media blackout of news about the existing danger from Fukushima and the possibility of a nuclear catastrophe. Members of the panel also addressed what can be done in response to the possibility of increased radiation exposure.

SUNY New Paltz biology professor Mike Boms explained how the earthquake and tsunami created conditions where all planned redundancies failed and the cores lost all cooling water.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROB WALTERS, MID HUDSON NEWS
(L-R): Mike Boms, Rose Marie Williams, Youko Yamamoto, Joel Tyner, Marilyn Ellie, Michele Riddell and Kimiko Link.

Due to the potential for serious global impact, panelists called for the Tokyo Electric Power Company to convene an international group of experts to manage the process, rather than the utility company handling it themselves.

Marilyn Ellie, of Indian Point Safe Energy Coalition, reminded the audience there are nuclear reactors in the United States that are built upon known geologic faults. There's Diablo Canyon in California and there's Indian Point near Peekskill. "Indian Point is a disaster waiting to happen," Boms said.

Ellie said governor Mario Cuomo is in favor of closing down Indian Point, but he needs more support. She said concerned people should contact the governor to thank him for his position on Indian Point and ask what can be done to help make that happen.

For more information, please contact Michele Riddell at 255-5482 or Kimiko Link at kimikolink@gmail.com. Additional information can also be found on the Facebook page, Fukushima Awareness Hudson Valley, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Fukushima-Awareness-Hudson-Valley/278493775633908?sk=info>.

cally sourced. The ink is black walnuts. It's literally 'of the place,'" Friday said. The guidebook itself describes how to find edible foods locally.

To learn more about the Fallkill art project, watch

this video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5VjREqaOdg&feature=youtu.be>) on YouTube.

To learn more about the Hudson Estuary Watershed Resiliency Project, head to <http://climate.cornell.edu/hudson-estuary-watershed-resiliency-project/>.

To see what's going on at SUNY New Paltz, head to www.newpaltz.edu.

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